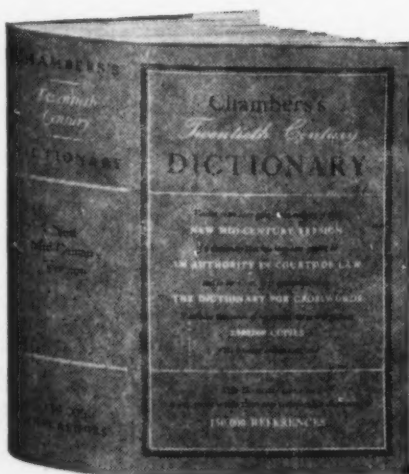
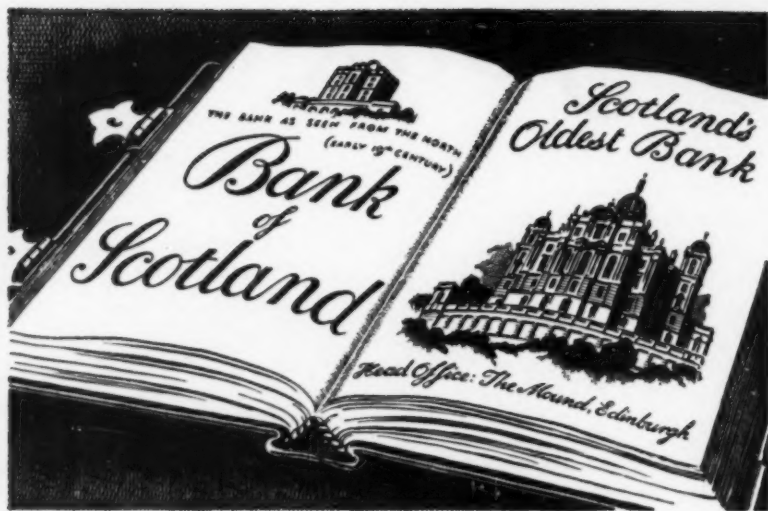


CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL



April 1953





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Part 4, April 1953.

F 1

How freely may a newspaper speak?

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Alice, Where Are You?

IAN THE JERROLD

THERE were no sounds now in Mardell Wood but pigeons' cooing and rooks' cawing and that chirping and twittering of small birds which the ear now catches and now drops again; but twenty-five years ago, in the old war now called the First World War, when Flora's mother had been a forestry-girl, the wood must have been noisy enough! Flora imagined those girls in their long, discreet tunics and round felt hats—there was an old snapshot at home in which her mother looked like a demure cowboy out of an old-fashioned musical comedy—and heard with her mind's ear their light, remote voices on a remote spring breeze, her mother's among them, eager and sweet.

'If you could on a free afternoon just slip over to Upper Rustock, darling, and see if Alice Beavan is still there. And see if anyone is cutting down Mardell Wood again *this* war! And give my love to Rustock Hill, and to Upper Rustock, and to Mardell Wood, but most of all to Alice.'

IT was only eighteen miles from Flora's camp at New Radnor to Rustock, but

Flora had had to spend forty minutes in a slow train, and then walk five miles of the way. She did not grudge the effort, for it was the sweetest, softest of spring days, and she was curious on her own account to see the place and the person who had made so great an impression on her mother's young mind that even her own young mind had taken the imprint—Mardell Wood and Rustock Hill, and the hillside cottage, and Alice Beavan of the long red hair and self-sufficient soul.

How lonely looked Rustock Hill, how barren, after the close, budding woodland! High up, among the outcropping boulders and the patches of old brown bracken, sheep crawled like lice, so small and far away. A sheep-bell sounded, remote, faint, ghostly, like a warning from another world. For Mother, this place had been peopled every weekday by lorry-loads of girls from the little market-town five miles away: but how lonely it looked to Flora now! No doubt, for those who lived in the scattered holdings on the hillside, some kind of loose-textured communal life obtained; but solitary souls who did not wish for contact with their fellows could live among these rocks like eagles in

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their mountain eyries, laws to themselves alone. A few weeks ago the local newspaper had been full of the trial of two smallholders from wild hill-land like this for a murder committed over two years before, discovered only by the chance visit of a stranger. A poor old feeble-minded woman, owner of a little property, had been maltreated and finally done to death by these precious two, her nephews.

The air was strong and pure and exhilarating as wine, so that to walk uphill was in itself a joy. The blurs of white blackthorn misting Mardell's verge were like signals to Flora to keep her on the track that would lead to Alice Beavan's glowing hearth and singing kettle and the shining brass and blacklead of her cottage room. And some way up the track Flora could now see the chimney of a low cottage showing above old orchard trees. Alice had lived like an eagle in her eyrie on the slope of Rustock, while other women gathered and clucked like farm-yard hens round one another's half-doors on the smallholdings below. Her neighbours had not greatly liked Alice, Mother said, in a tone which meant that therefore Flora's mother had not greatly liked the neighbours. Alice was too proud to be liked by common people. Her thoughts ranged out of reach of the cottage women's thoughts; and her determined spinsterhood pricked local feminine opinion, for wives desire always to draw all women into the community of wifely cares, and those who reject too many honest offers grow to be looked upon as aliens in the flock, weeds in the corn, witches among the good-wives.

This haughtiness of Alice in itself drew Flora, to whom camp life seemed like the incessant clucking of barn-door fowls, bringing neither intimacy nor privacy to an unhappy heart. Alice of the long red hair and self-sufficient soul—Alice, who, according to Mother, had gaily rejected would-be lovers because she 'didn't want her nice cottage cluttered up by a man's things' and would be 'no one's servant but her own,' might be able to help Flora to armour her own too vulnerable heart, at present aching from a recent wound of love. Alice, who had lived alone from choice, and not from wounds, might teach Flora's wounded heart to choose to live alone.

Alice's loves had been her cottage and her freedom. Alice had worked harder than any man, harder than a land-girl, even, in her

cottage and garden. The cottage had gleamed white, like hedge-spread linen, through the apple-trees, for Alice whitewashed it with her own hands every spring. Alice ruddled the kitchen floor every week and washed the dairy floor every day. In the bedroom Mother had slept in, the old uneven floorboards had been like dark glass. Alice had known the names of many of the constellations, and on a starry night, walking up from the market train that ran twice a week out from the little town, would speculate upon the destiny of man. Alice had studied dreams and their interpretation, and was going, she always said, to write a book about dreams some day—only she wrote so slowly, and had so many other things to do. Alice had been a paragon, a pearl, according to poor Mother, for whom that eighteen months in Mardell Wood had been a brief adventurous interlude in a life which thenceforward followed a set, domestic course. No doubt Mother had transferred to Alice of the long red hair some of the glamour of these wild hills and of the primitive life so different from middle-class suburbia. Nobody could really, Flora had often reflected, be quite so wonderful as Mother's Alice Beavan, gay, vigorous, resourceful, proud, accomplished, fine to look at, shrewd in judgment, acid-sweet at heart.

But, even if Alice were not quite so wonderful—and shrewdness might well be touched with caustic now, and gaiety harshened, as the long red hair must certainly be streaked with grey—still, she might be able to make clear to Flora's sad soul the satisfaction of loving things, which cannot abandon the heart that loves them, rather than persons, who tear the heart and go.

But if this was Upper Rustock, Alice Beavan was surely gone from it! A polyanthus hung out a pale flower from a tuft of wiry grass at a sodden gate, from the top of which Flora's glove came green with moss. Over the garden-beds creeping grasses clotted together the spearing daffodil-buds. A peeling skin of lime-wash hung in patches on the stone walls of this little, low cottage that stood back behind its wild-hedged garden and faced the track, looking with bleary eyes into the trees of Mardell Wood.

Flora had been prepared to find that Alice was less wonderful than Mother's romantic memories, but not that she was gone away, or dead! Gone away, she who had loved the place, her property, with such passion?

ALICE, WHERE ARE YOU?

Dead, she who had been so vigorous and so proud?

AS Flora walked slowly up the uneven path of cinders she felt as if sad eyes were watching her from the house. Grey, ragged lace hung at the downstairs windows. At the side of the door a battered enamel basin full of rotting potato-peelings was being pecked at by two speckled hens. There were three eggs lying in the shallow lid of a tin box on one of the sills. A hungry-looking tortoise-shell cat jumped up on the sill and looked at Flora with sad, half-shut eyes, and opened its mouth in a silent plaint. As Flora raised her hand to knock, she saw a white daphne mezereum, honey-stalks, in flower against the corner of the cottage wall.

There was a shrub of white daphne in the garden at home, offshoot of a twig that Alice had given to Mother in a bunch of spring flowers at their parting. Flora, when she was a little girl, had thought its name was really honey-stalks, because her mother always called it that. Alice had invented the name 'honey-stalks' for the sweet shrub, Mother said, because she had not known its proper name. The postman, who had been courting Alice at the time, had said its name was mysterium, but Alice would have none of such a name! She would have none of the postman, either. It was her belief that the postman only wanted to rob her of her independence so that he could get his hands on her property.

There was no answer to Flora's knock. The cat walked along the sill. Flora put out her hand to stroke its head, and then to protect the eggs which might roll at a touch off the shallow lid. A voice from a window above said hoarsely: 'Leave them eggs alone!'

Flora flushed and looked up. The sun stood above the shoulder of the hill behind the cottage. It dazzled her at first, and made the dark face that looked out of an upper window very dark. 'You don't want the cat to knock them off, do you?'

There was a loud, coarse laugh. 'I reckon it weren't the cat was going to knock them off!'

'Then you can reckon again,' said Flora, and her impulse was to turn on these words and stalk off. But she had not come all this way only to return without news of Alice.

'If you wants eggs,' said the shadow-darkened face, 'I could let you have a few, I expect. They're dear, though, very dear.'

The eyes stared down with an uncertain, frowning, half-blind effect above high, swollen-looking cheekbones. It was a heavy yet flaccid face that seemed to hang upon the forehead's rounded bones, with a heavy chin which paled down in curves of flesh towards the sickly-pale, creased breast, across which a dark hand clutched a gaping blouse.

'I don't want eggs,' said Flora shortly. 'I thought Miss Beavan lived here. I came to see her.'

'Who?'

'Miss Beavan. Alice Beavan.'

The slow glance between those frowning, swollen lids slithered aside. 'I thought you'd come for eggs. We gets all sorts here in these days.'

'I'm not in the black market for anything, thank you,' replied Flora. 'I simply came to call on Miss Beavan.'

'Well, Miss Beavan don't live here,' answered the other slowly.

'So I see,' said Flora. 'Can you tell me where she does live?'

'No, I can't.'

'When did she leave here?'

'Oh—years ago, I reckon.'

'Years ago!'

It seemed useless to ply with questions Alice's slow-witted and inimical supplanter. Flora had noticed one or two cottages below in the valley; she would work her way down to one of those, and make her inquiries there.

FLORA made for the garden-gate. But outside the cottage the mist of blackthorn hanging entangled on dark twigs halted her with a repetition of its signal, as she had imagined, from Alice Beavan, and she felt a curious unwillingness to leave this place, a curious persuasion that Alice Beavan wanted her to turn back. This, after all, was Upper Rustock, the place where Mother had been so happy, the place that Alice had loved so much. How strange that, loving it so much, Alice should have left it.

'Gone away! She's gone away!' That was what the two hill-farmers had told everyone who inquired after their old feeble-minded kinswoman—gone away to stay with relations, gone away to Cardiff. And all the while the old woman had been lying under the grass in

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the orchard. They walked past her grave, those precious two, every day when they went to feed the turkeys.

Flora turned slowly back to the cottage, glancing, as she went, in among the orchard's gnarled old trees. At the same moment the voice from the upper window called with a sort of grudging inquisitiveness: 'What do you want with Alice Beavan, then?'

'I happen to be in camp at New Radnor, and I came over to see her, that's all. Did Miss Beavan marry, then?' she asked, looking suddenly up, catching an expression of fuddled amazement, touched, she thought, with something calculating and sly, on the face at the window.

'Marry!' echoed the woman. There was a short, blank pause, and then once again she gave that loud, coarse laugh. 'Not her! Not likely!'

'How do you know it wasn't likely, if you didn't know Miss Beavan?' asked Flora.

'I never said I didn't know her. I said I don't know where she is now, and no more I do.'

'You said she left years ago,' said Flora boldly, watching as well as she could in the dazzle of sunlight that frowning, masklike face.

'So she did leave years ago. She left when I came, see. What's wrong with that?' asked the woman, her hand on the catch of the window as if she might in a moment slam it shut. Yet she stayed, staring down, frowning, as if curiosity, or perhaps fear, held her, her buttonless blouse now fallen apart, disclosing the sagging flesh of the bosom so strangely white under the dark, congested face.

'Then you must know *when* she left,' countered Flora, her hand shading her eyes, staring up. 'If you took this cottage from Miss Beavan—'

'Took it from her!' echoed the other. 'Who took it from her? Nobody took it from her,' she said harshly. 'What do you mean? She's gone away, I say!'

'Where to?' asked Flora. 'Relations at Cardiff?'

'Cardiff! What's the matter with you, girl? I reckon it's some other Alice Beavan you're wanting.' And with the quick and fumbling movement of wrath or fear the woman dragged the casement to. The catch was broken. It swung open again. But she herself had receded behind those squalid and secretive walls, leaving Flora cold and a little frightened, as

if, in only letting her fancy stray to the darkness of the grave, she had called up a ghost.

THE new spring grass was lush and brilliant in the old orchard, and Flora could see a lavish scatter of wild daffodils growing there. That grim and furtive woman who, like a great, sick, slow-moving rat, had just retreated into her hole, knew where Alice Beavan was—knew, and would not tell! Here, in the squalor and neglect of the once-gay little cottage, lay the secret of Alice Beavan! *Who took it from her? Nobody took it from her!* Somebody, somebody—she took it from her, sighed the little wind in the topmost branches of the young oaks, as if a sigh on the wind were all that was left of vigorous Alice Beavan.

Uncertain what to do, determined only not to go, Flora stood and looked at the dismal, derelict garden. The currant-bushes, on which pieces of torn grey curtain-lace hung here and there as if to shade the memory of fruit which had rotted unpicked on the boughs beneath, had been planted by Alice Beavan's firm, strong hands. Was not this whole struggling and desecrated little garden-plot a fading memorial of Alice Beavan, like a tomb of soft stone upon which the rain and moss obliterate the name once sharply cut? Had not Alice Beavan planted these bulbs that struggled up through the binding coarse hillside grasses, this wall-plum which now sprouted in great bronze suckers from the root? Alice Beavan had made a garden on Rustock Hill, and now Rustock Hill was taking the garden back to its savage self, unhurryingly, surely, year by year, smothering and strangling exotic garden-shoots, matting aspirations over with a tangle of wiry green, bringing the triumph of the bracken, the nettle, and the gorse. This woman who lived here would do nothing to arrest the process of absorption, for she herself, said Flora, is rotting back into Rustock Hill!

The daffodils in the orchard drew Flora with their fresh gaiety, as Alice Beavan might have drawn her, and she was about to walk towards them when she heard a grating noise inside the cottage, and after a moment the door opened. The woman who had spoken to her from the window stood there, breathing heavily. She had pinned her gaping blouse together with a gold brooch and fastened back locks of hair which had been hanging loose. 'I doesn't

ALICE, WHERE ARE YOU?

often use this door, and the bolt's rusted stiff,' she said through lips that had a bluish colour. Her skin was mottled with a purple shade, as though the blood only struggled through the veins. A sweet, sickly alcoholic waft drove out on the gusty sigh she gave. She curbed her coarse voice to a guarded propitiatory politeness as she asked: 'What did you want with Alice Beavan, then? I reckon you're not a friend of hers. You're too young.' Perhaps because she had tidied herself up, perhaps because she had flogged her wits with drink, she seemed less obtuse than she had seemed before—less obtuse and with a more cautious air, as though she saw some necessity to dissemble.

'It's my mother who's a friend of Alice Beavan's,' Flora said. Let this woman understand that Alice Beavan had friends who, if they were not satisfied of her well-being, would not casually desert and forget her.

'Your mother, eh?' The irises of the small grey eyes looked very light-coloured between the puffy darkened lids as they shifted calculatingly about Flora's face and figure.

'Yes, and if you can't tell me where Alice Beavan's gone, so that I can tell my mother, there must be *somebody* who can. I shall ask everywhere. May I come in? I'm tired. I've walked a long way, and I've got a long way to walk back.' Flora made her request in the tone of one who intends to force an entrance, for she recognised hesitancy, and perhaps fear, in the other woman's face.

'I reckon the fire's out,' the woman said, but she made no attempt to stop Flora from going past her into the cottage room.

THE pleasant smell of wood-smoke still permeated the low square room, but the fire was very low, and here, inside, was the same colourless and sad disorder. The stone floor was dark and dank, and looked as if the preparation of many meals had left traces that had been trodden in rather than washed away. Stacks of tattered magazines and a pile of unwashed clothes lay on the dresser. The wood-ash stood up to the grate-bars and half-filled the rusty fender. No brass was polished, no iron blacklead, no wood scrubbed here for love or beauty's sake. Only the necessary tasks of mere animal existence were dragged through, day after day, leaving smears behind them. Yet on the central table a glass jar full of wild daffodils

stood, fresh and clean, new-picked, some with their thinning membranous spathes only just bursting to blunt tips of yellow, a bunch of their grey-green spikes thrust in with them.

'May I sit down?'

'Please yourself.'

This was the room the details of which Flora's mother had dwelt on so lovingly, as if, in all the middle-class ease of her subsequent life, she had never again quite known true comfort. Here Mother and Alice Beavan had sat at evening by the huge log-fire, when work and supper were over, and the wind over Mardell Wood whistled up snow. Mother had brushed her hair before the fire, eschewing her icy bedroom. And sometimes Alice had taken the pins out of her long red hair, as if she, as well as Mother, had been only eighteen. And Mother had told her the gossip of the wood, and Alice had been caustic and entertaining about their neighbours. 'She'd been hardly anywhere, and read hardly anything, but she was the most entertaining person I've ever known. Of course, she was a good deal older than I was. Perhaps I'd think her narrow now. But oh, I didn't, then!'

Now it was cold in this kitchen, and dark, for the sun did not enter at door or window, and the dank floor smelt like the tomb, and no one spoke. Looking up, Flora found the other woman's eyes fixed on her face with an intent, catlike stare, washed-looking eyes in their puffy lids appraising her. At once they slanted aside with a blink and looked across her shoulder, but they had startled Flora, and she half stood up, with a sense that those eyes now looked at somebody behind her chair. Alice Beavan, tall, capable, and gay, red-haired, was in the room with them, and stood behind Flora's chair looking with Flora's own repulsion towards the heavy, craftily-glancing woman who stood leaning upon the dresser there.

'Is Alice Beavan ever coming back?' asked Flora abruptly, with trembling lips. 'Did she let you this place? Or sell it? Is that her grandfather-clock—or yours?'

There was no reply. Flora stood up and took a step back as if to get farther within the protecting aura of Alice Beavan. The high mantelpiece was laden with china ornaments, rubbed biscuits-tins, packets of tea, an old wooden salt-box, and an enamel candlestick choked with guttered wax. Above the shelf was the picture of a ship worked in

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crude wools of blue and red and yellow, in a bird's-eye maple frame. Flora could not read the name worked beneath it in black wool letters, but she had no need to, for she had often heard of that wool-picture of H.M.S. *Renown*, worked by Alice Beavan's great-aunt on her bed of sickness, before she died and left her cottage and all its contents to Alice.

'Did Alice leave *all* her things behind, then?' cried Flora, trembling. 'Where did she go, without her furniture, or her pictures, or anything at all? When she loved them so much! You say she went away. But I think, I think, she's *dead*!' cried Flora. In her own ears her voice sounded like a plain, bald accusation.

The woman's lips dropped apart, and the dark upper lids lifted over the light eyes as she stared at Flora; and suddenly Flora felt a little shrinking of personal fear. She was alone with this big woman in this lonely place, and the shade of Alice Beavan standing behind her had no hands to help her with. Speaking the more loudly and bitterly because of that shrinking of fear she felt, Flora cried: 'Alice Beavan was always afraid that somebody would take the place away from her!' Her accusing voice seemed to beat back diminishingly into her own ears in the silence that followed.

The other woman moistened her lips, staring at the floor, and at last said: 'Well, they didn't. What's the matter, girl?' She spoke as though a dim wish to propitiate stirred in her, and sighed, rubbing the greasy corner of the dresser with her finger. 'You likes it pretty well in the Army, I expect? Girls mostly likes to be together, when they're young.' Turning her heavy inelastic body, heaving herself with an effort away from the supporting ledge, she came slowly towards the table on which the jar of daffodils stood.

'You won't tell me what's happened to Alice, but I shall find out,' cried Flora, going towards the door. 'I shall ask everywhere—*everywhere*!'

'Would you like these blooms?' asked the woman on a muted note.

'I don't want anything, except to know about Alice. Where did she go? When? She's *dead*, isn't she? You know, and you won't tell me.'

'Reckon they'll brighten up your camp a bit,' said the woman, taking the daffodils out of the jar and shaking the water from their stems. Leaning heavily again on the dresser

and opening a drawer, she picked out a knot of string and began with clumsy fingers to tie the wet stalks round. She patted the flowers together and came towards Flora standing in the doorway, but Flora would not take the bunch, repeating tremblingly, going out: 'You understand, I shall ask about Alice *everywhere* until I know—until *everyone* knows!'

The woman behind her broke a twig off the daphne mezereum at the cottage wall. 'I'll put a bit of honey-stalks with the daffies,' she said, sighing a little with her exertions. 'Smell it. Real sweet, it smells.' The green twig-end had peeled off in a long white heel, and the woman bit it off and spat it out and stuck the twig of curling clustered flowers in among the soft stems.

'Honey-stalks?' said Flora.

'I calls it that. I don't know its right name.'

'Alice—Alice Beavan used to call it honey-stalks!' Flora could feel for a moment the woman's hand, hard and cool as a board, beneath her fingers as she took the bunch of daffodils.

'I dare say.'

Flora wanted to keep beneath her own, now, the hard touch of that hand, for a moment, only a moment or two, longer, for now, at the instant of parting, she saw that there was something more than a bunch of daffodils that should pass between them! But the hard hand slipped away, leaving the flowers in Flora's, and as it slipped away Flora looked quickly up, as if her eyes might take what her hand could not, and met the other woman's eyes, embarrassed, apologetic, that quickly slipped aside. Her throat swelled suddenly with the imminence of helpless tears. Was it to hide them that she also looked aside, or to look for somebody who had been standing at the woman's shoulder, and now was suddenly there no longer?

'Alice Beavan's all right, you tell your Mum,' said the woman haltingly, stroking the thin cat. 'Nobody took her cottage from her. She took good care of that! And as for marrying, she weren't the marrying sort!' And with a short, faint laugh she picked up the three eggs in one hand and turned back into the cottage without any more good-byes. Flora heard the bolt grinding home.

FROM the bottom of the track, where the gate led through into Mardell Wood,

PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOUR

Flora looked back and saw the diluted black-thorn misting the woodland verge. Then she turned through the gate, wrapping her handkerchief around the oozy stalks of her daffodils, and walked slowly along the shady and cool path through Mardell Wood. 'Alice Beavan's all right, you tell your Mum.' She could not tell her that. What should she tell her?

Flora had plenty of time to spare before her single-line train puffed out of the little station five miles away, and she went in among the nut-boughs over the carpet of bright dog's-mercury, and sat down under the trees, and

wept. She wept for her own love, and for the wound which seemed as if it would never heal, and because her heart told her that indeed the wound *would* heal, and that she would love again—and suffer again, perhaps. She wept because tears, once she had started to shed them, comforted her, and because she knew she would not be able to weep in camp, where one was never alone. Here, for a while at least, she was alone with the sad but strong insistentcies of her human heart, the chirping of small birds and the cooing of pigeons, and the trees that had been saplings when Mother was a girl.

May First Story: *By Guess and by God* by Albert Richard Wetjen.

Prophets Without Honour

The Decline of the Natural Weather-Predictor

D. St LEGER-GORDON

MOST of us with a reasonably long experience can remember some weather-wise old countryman whom it was customary to consult before arranging an outdoor expedition. We all know, too, that his modern representative, 'if such there breathe,' refers inquirers to the latest meteorological forecast—and that has become a comedian's chestnut requiring no further comment. None the less, the decline and fall of the natural weather-prophet has been an interesting process.

Within the present century the natural weather-prophet has passed through three distinct phases. Fifty years ago he drew his conclusions from nature, and when sky and wind baffled him there always remained his infallible rheumatics. Later, as his standards progressed, he acquired a barometer, to which, however, he never became a complete convert, since the inferences to be drawn from its move-

ments were sometimes involved. Then came the radio with its daily official weather outlook, and to this oracle he has transferred his entire allegiance. Had the schooner *Hesperus* sailed a century later, the old salt who predicted her wreck would have done so upon the strength of the shipping forecast rather than upon any observation of the moon with the 'golden ring'—the latter being quite outdated.

Yet, outdoor men still get rheumatics, under more scientific names nowadays, and the natural weather-signs may still be read, although they no longer form an essential part of a countryman's education. Rather, country people now regard them in much the same light as the discarded superstitions held by their parents or grandparents. Needless to say, superstition, abysmal ignorance, and real science were inextricably mingled in old-fashioned weather-lore. A confused idea of

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cause and effect often led to diametrically opposite constructions being placed upon incidents to which no real significance attached. For example, gnats dancing in a still atmosphere were considered fair- or foul-weather prophets according to local tradition. Actually, of course, they indicate nothing, except the prevailing conditions which bring them out, and sunshine, frost, or flood may, with equal likelihood, follow their activities.

The simple notion that abundant berries foretell a hard winter persist to this day to an extent quite irreconcilable with modern knowledge. One hears the question seriously discussed even at responsible gatherings such as brains-trusts or nature parliaments, and no matter how emphatically the idea is repudiated it survives scientific rejection, like faith in the horoscope. Even if the berries—which, in fact, owe their existence to a favourable setting of the blossom—were in reality a deliberate natural provision for an impending shortage, the birds defeat any such purpose by demolishing the supply long before hard weather sets in.

The same principle applies to winter migrants in unusual numbers, conventionally regarded as refugees from the Frost King's armies advancing with abnormal ferocity, but really the products of a prolific hatching season, caring little about approaching winter in latitudes which they habitually abandon.

Apart from conventional beliefs, the underlying truths of which have mostly been perverted by ignorance or error, the old proverbs are remarkably reliable in the main. They could scarcely be otherwise, evolving as they do from the wisdom and experience of centuries. Nevertheless, doubt sometimes exists as to correct interpretation and phrasing. Concerning the moon circle, for instance, nobody seems to be quite certain whether 'the nearer the ring the nearer the rain' or 'the nearer the ring the farther the rain' is the original version. Actually, the point is immaterial, since the diameter of the ominous hoop apparently makes very little difference. And, curious as it may seem, the moon circle figured less in the old-fashioned countryman's weather-lore than did the purely mythical influence exercised by lunar phases or changes, in which he believed implicitly. For some unaccountable reason he attached very little significance to the golden ring, although quite as obvious and portentous as the morning reds, which he never failed to note with gloomy

and well-justified forebodings. Indeed—and this again is quite unaccountable—even to-day an ordinary farm-labourer does not seem to notice a sun or moon circle unless it is pointed out, and then he remains unimpressed. It has no place in his meteorological outlook.

I HAVE known many countrymen who drew sage, although not necessarily correct, conclusions from natural phenomena. There is always the danger of wrong interpretation. Farmers anxious to harvest their hay often hailed the glow-worm's light as a beacon of hope, and not without good reason, up to a point. The glow-worm is certainly a fair-weather insect, but, like the gnats already mentioned, it is a creature of the moment. It indicates pleasant conditions, but kindles its lamp in tribute to sun-warmed earth or the charm of a beautiful summer night which has followed a beautiful summer day. Its joy is for the present alone, however. It takes no thought for the morrow or what the morrow may bring. The most wonderful glow-worm display that I ever witnessed was followed by a wet day. Yet, to this no significance should be attached. The night was warm and still, tempting forth an unusual number of glow-worms, and in the clear atmosphere which preceded the downpour their tiny lights twinkled brilliantly. That was the only connection between the illumination and the rain.

Among inanimate things the relation of circumstance to sequel may be quite as indirect. In the calm before a storm the brawling of a stream becomes loud and far-sounding, so the river's cry, as they call it in the West, is considered a sign of precipitation. In unsettled conditions the sky is often clear, and I knew an old shepherd who many times predicted rain because the stars were thick.

There were people, too, who based their conclusions upon the behaviour of birds, sometimes attaching an undue significance to commonplace actions, as in the days when superstition ran rife and simple folk attached an omen to everyday incidents. There can be no doubt, of course, that most animals are natural barometers, but they react upon a short-term policy. They can anticipate the immediate future only. The habitual hibernator certainly makes provision, but only for the winter which occurs in the normal course of its life. Abnormal climatic conditions, or

PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOUR

freak weather, in modern idiom, always find wild life unprepared to meet the emergency. During the long drought of 1949, moles were unable to live underground. They could be seen anywhere upon the surface scratching in leaf-drifts or ditches, searching for the creeping things which had disappeared for lack of moisture. The great frost of 1947 proved devastating to insectivorous birds and mammals which depended upon green food. Rabbits starved in their thousands, while birds such as woodpeckers and wrens, to mention but two examples, are still conspicuous by their scarcity in country where they were previously abundant. No premonition of difficulties ahead had warned such creatures to seek places where their needs could be better supplied.

Birds are quick to sense approaching weather change, but no quicker than an artificial barometer. Indeed, their reactions commonly correspond with a rising or falling glass. Their appearance upon a lawn in considerable numbers after a long drought usually foretells a break. Before frost they flock to bird-table or window-sill and are seen assiduously grub-hunting in dark corners or under bushes—places which they otherwise avoid. Under such circumstances they are taking a lead from lower orders of life, worms, grubs, and molluscs generally, for these respond even more readily to barometric influences, being nearer the earth both literally and metaphorically. The slug comes out and the worm ascends to meet the coming rain; the grub or insect seeks cover against approaching cold; and animals which prey upon such forms of life must seek them where they are most likely to be found.

As often as not the main interest lies in an animal's ability to anticipate the reactions of others to influences sensed by all. Not far from my home is a great flour-mill, still worked by water-power, and standing, therefore, near a river, the banks of which provide burrowing room for numerous rats and voles. It is a Dartmoor river and subject like all mountain streams to sudden floods, which often overflow the banks and wash out the occupants. The rodents are seldom caught, however, at least by the floods. The rats and voles can interpret the voice of the river, which talks, as all rivers will, to those who can listen. When it murmurs of storms away in the hills and gathering waters which soon must roll, the bank-dwellers evacuate their unsafe

quarters, trekking away singly or in little companies to find emergency lodgings above high-water mark. But they are not the only creatures to hear the river's message, and bad news for them is good news for others. Numerous cats are kept in the mill to cope with the rodent problem, and these, too, not only know all about the coming flood, but also have a shrewd idea as to what the rats will do. Where the rats run the cats are waiting and the trek from the river-bank becomes a long tale of slaughter, for cats specially bred from a rat-killing strain are opportunists by nature.

UPON the whole, birds and beasts may be considered weather-prophets in so far that they sense indications and act accordingly. Some announce their premonitions by outcry, joyous or otherwise, according to the effect produced upon themselves. The only bird that undoubtedly predicts rain by call is the peacock, the only mammal the porcupine. Needless to add, these creatures do not intentionally broadcast the outlook. They merely anticipate discomfort and complain in advance, like Lewis Carroll's Red Queen. How the green woodpecker acquired his supplementary title of 'rain bird' is a puzzle, the implication being entirely unfounded. It is as palpable a misnomer as the 'blind worm' for the slow-worm, or the 'black cat' for the fisher marten. Lifelong study proves there is no more connection between the woodpecker's call and precipitation of any kind than between a sparrow's chirp and starlight.

In reality a falling barometer has a depressing and therefore a silencing effect upon animal life. That most perennially vociferous of all night-birds, the tawny owl, says little or nothing when rain is imminent. In direct contrast to the peacock, a cock pheasant does not wail before he is wet—perhaps because his vocabulary does not provide for complaint. He exults in a lightening atmosphere, however, and when the sunset tints promise a glorious morrow he crows upon his perch from the depths of a carefree heart, content with the present and untroubled for the future.

As fair-weather prophets, however, both owl and pheasant may disappoint their supporters in a most disconcerting manner. Unlike an artificial barometer, they are peculiarly susceptible to a thundery tendency, which they register long before the human senses are conscious of it. The behaviour of a

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thunder-shy dog often warns its owner that a storm is brewing, and inaudible vibrations, or even an atmosphere supercharged with electricity, set owls hooting or pheasants crowing throughout a countryside still bathed in silence and sunshine. The birds give no conscious warning of the developing storm. They may not even be aware of its approach in the human sense of awareness. None the less, the abnormal atmosphere strikes a disturbing chord, to which they respond by abnormal behaviour, the effect being comparable with that produced by an eclipse of the sun, or at times by brilliant moonlight upon diurnal creatures. Under such circumstances, therefore, these most reliable of fair-weather prophets may completely if temporarily reverse custom, and in so doing betray those who trusted their earlier predictions. Indeed, an owl's hoot or pheasant's crow can be either the best or the worst of weather-signs, and, like a text without its context, often merely misleading.

WHILE the reactions of birds are usually accountable, however, those of beasts sometimes baffle the imagination. Every experienced sportsman has witnessed the extraordinary lethargy of certain animals before heavy rain, when rabbits, to mention the most notable example, sit tight in burrow or cover, making little apparent effort to avoid ferret, spaniel, or man himself. Nothing in nature is at all comparable with the behaviour of rabbits which will not bolt, and there can be no doubt about the weather connection. Custom has proved it too long, but this only increases the mystery.

The pedestrian dodges the car quite as nimbly before a shower as after one, nor does

the natural desire for continued existence rise and fall with the barometer, like Lochinvar's love with the Solway tide. Upon the same principle one might reasonably expect the timid rabbit to take avoiding action against its deadliest enemies irrespective of barometric pressure, yet the astonishing fact remains that it does not. One rabbit after another allows itself to be killed by a ferret rather than scuttle from its burrow when rain is probable outside. The alternatives seem scarcely open to comparison or choice and admit of only one conclusion. Fear in the animal is a mere instinct, like its response to atmospheric conditions, the latter being the stronger. By immutable law the rabbit remains indoors or goes out, as the scarlet pimpernel opens or closes, according to the suitability of the weather. Like Casabianca, the rabbit must conform to regulation, fire or ferret notwithstanding. That is the position, fantastic but nevertheless true.

To pursue the matter further, however, would mean entering the realm of animal psychology, which is a very different subject. Nor would it be the correct note upon which to finish, for an animal's weather sensibilities are as purely physical as the old countryman's rheumatics. Its anatomy is its barometer, the tendency of which it announces by its behaviour—for man to interpret if so disposed. Perhaps, unfortunately, modern man finds the official forecast more intelligible and, in the main, more comprehensive, as the animal issues no further outlook. Indeed, the latter phrase might be applied quite literally to the lost status of the natural weather-prophet, who was once 'not without honour,' even in his own country and place. Every dog has his day, however, and a day once gone is beyond recall.

Sweet Spears

*Winter's trance
Is done to-day,
Hearts must dance
A roundelay.*

*Gloom must slip
From out the sky,
Lambs must skip—
And so must I.*

*Yes, skip I must
Though old sheep stare,
For Spring has thrust
Sweet spears through Care.*

DOREEN KING.



Tempestuous Isle

Lundy—Past and Present

Colonel P. T. EThERTON

SOME twenty miles off the north coast of Devon lies the island of Lundy, a pocket domain of romance and diversity, one of the strangest and least known of the islands of the British Empire. No island in the world can lay claim to so much within so little space—a hermitage for early Christians, a nest of pirates, a king's retreat, the hiding-place of an assassin, a stronghold of royalists, headquarters of English, French, Spanish, and even Turkish sea-rovers, a convict-settlement, a bird-sanctuary. Here survives a last stronghold of rugged individualism and feudal privilege; here still exists a tiny, private principality, four miles long by one mile wide, which can challenge comparison with Juan Fernández or Treasure Island.

Lundy is a strategic sentinel on the shipping-lane from England to the New World, and, long before the days of Liberator and Clipper travel, it was linked by bird-migration with the Atlantic, the United States, and Canada. In addition to providing a home for rare birds, however, Lundy was the place from which the first rabbits came to England. The father of all the cabbages, Methuselahs of vegetation, forerunners of the vegetable so many learn to eat, but so few to cook, was discovered here.

This cabbage is amongst the oldest things on the island, prehistoric and probably pre-human, belonging to a glacial age in the world's history, long before *homo sapiens* attempted to exist. There is said to be nothing new under the sun, but here is a cabbage that is a recent discovery and that defied detection since plant-life began. Lundy can also claim the first mention on record of the gannet or solan goose.

Then there is the trapdoor spider, another of the surprises of Lundy, inviting attention and study. I had met with this quaint spider in the wilds of South America, but the Lundy one is the only specimen of its kind in the British Isles. There is no clear idea as to how he managed to arrive there without visible means of conveyance. Did he float somehow along the Gulf Stream to take up his new quarters, or was he, perhaps, washed ashore from a wreck?

This trapdoor spider is an accomplished builder and makes a nest about nine inches long and an inch in diameter, fitted at one end with a door hinged with web. The inside of this tube or tunnel is lined with lustrous web, the cleverly built contraption being placed just below the surface in soft ground. Always

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alert and on the watch, the spider is extremely sensitive to the movements of insects as they pass over the ground above, and he seems to know just the right moment to raise the door, spring out, make his capture, and get back home again. He is careful not to let the door close behind him when launching an attack, for the cover is difficult to reopen once it snaps to. To ensure against this, the spider, when in action, places its hindlegs underneath the open door.

ON Lundy dwells the only 'king' outside of royalty, with his own stamps and coinage for local circulation, who can remove anyone he wishes from his midget kingdom, or import any cargo free of the restraints of customs or excise, and who can deny anyone the right to land. The whole political, religious, and economic set-up is unique; in a sense the owner is his own prelate, owing allegiance to the King alone. Some, indeed, say that Lundy is no part of the realm at all, and beyond the reach of politics. In consequence of royal charters the owner of the island has rights and privileges which sound strangely in modern ears.

The island is free from all taxation and any money earned there is not subject to income-tax. No overseer or tax-gatherer ever knocks at the door, and the gas and water man never comes. Politicians may yell at the polls, but Lundy, like Gallio, cares for none of those things.

The coinage for local circulation has the familiar puffin on one side and the bust of the overlord on the other. But the present lord's principal hobby is not coinage, stamps, or embattled history; it is the wondrous bird-life of the island. The stamps, by the way, are coloured red, brown, and blue, and there is great demand for them throughout the world, especially in America.

Lundy has been privately owned throughout historical decades. Ordinances relating to it began with King Stephen in 1135 and ended with the Charles Stuart who lost his head. It was not until the middle of the last century that this astounding islet first came to popular notice, when it was owned by the Reverend Hudson Heaven, and thereafter was known as the 'Kingdom of Heaven.'

The present Lord of Lundy is Mr M. C. Harman, who during the War made a point of entertaining American and Canadian

officers and men who needed quiet and peaceful surroundings. His son, Lance-Corporal John Harman, Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. He died fighting in Burma after deeds of almost incredible bravery, which, had he lived, would have made him a worthy overlord of this historic island.

At one time Lundy would have attracted the attention of U.N.O., or any adolescent League of Nations, for from its fastness came raid after raid against the mainland and passing ships, the aggressor retreating to the safety of a castle with walls five feet thick, and with on one side a precipice over which undesirables were hurled on to the rocks below. By reputation, these toughs and swash-bucklers of Lundy were as fierce as the Atlantic gales which pound the island shores. Yet the visitor to-day who lands at Lundy and examines the island directory would find it contains the names of but twenty-five or thirty people, six of whom are lighthousemen. History seems to have been blown away with the wind, and only geography remains, the hard core of a rocky islet and its bird voices that call all day across green waters and among the rock pinnacles. So large and pervading during the spring and summer, and at migration time, is Lundy's feathered population that you would think the island was talking in its sleep of the long days of imperious history and the nights of shipwreck and plunder. Along the western side the Atlantic surges against the four-hundred-feet unscaleable cliffs with a three-thousand-mile punch behind it.

THE record of Lundy can be traced back to prehistoric and legendary times when St Patrick was starting on his lecture tour in Ireland. On the way he came here, and legend tells us that this call explains the absence of snakes. The real story of the island is fragmentary. The first book on the subject appears to have been in Icelandic; there are others in Latin, and one in Welsh. In fact, these three languages seem to have had control of the island story before the King's English was finally employed.

In the 12th century King Stephen awarded Lundy as fief to one of the Montmorencies, or Mariscoes, a name as prominent in its way as that of any of the barons of England or France. These Lords at once fortified the

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island and raised a castle built high up above the only landing-cove. The many dwellers have long since gone, but the castle still stands, looking out over the Atlantic, splendid and defiant.

In the reign of Henry II Sir Jordan de Marisco still further strengthened his position by marrying Henry's niece. After becoming close kinsman to royalty it was expected Sir Jordan would run a straight course; on the contrary, he went in for large-scale raiding until he became a menace of such magnitude that Henry declared Lundy forfeit to the Crown and awarded it to the Knights Templar. It was easy to issue the rescript, much as a modern mandate might be given to U.N.O., but it was quite another matter to enforce the order. The Lord of Lundy ignored the royal command and Henry could do nothing about it.

Henry passed on, and his son Richard reigned in his stead for ten years, to be followed by John, the worst king England ever had. Chroniclers said of him that every time he went to bed at night he was a worse man than in the morning, and each time he rose in the morning he was worse than the night before. John figures largely in the story of Lundy. He found his match when he thought that he could do better than his father and that his commands would be instantly obeyed. Continuing with his wishful thinking, he ordered de Marisco to get out. What did de Marisco do? He just laughed and stayed on. 'Get out,' thundered John from his palace in London. 'Come and get me out,' replied de Marisco. John tried again and again, but was helpless in face of the de Marisco defiance. De Marisco added insult to injury by immediate and big raids against the mainland. Had John possessed a fleet, he could have brought the Mariscoes to book, by an amphibious expedition such as we were to see in Normandy seven hundred years later. John tried everything, fair means and foul, but nothing availed.

THE circling years again rolled on. Lundy became more than ever a headquarters of violence, and the de Mariscoes and their descendants continued to rule. One of them set up a new low-level record, even for the de Mariscoes, by participation in the attempted murder of Henry III. The old record says 'William de Marisco who conspired the death

of Henry III persuaded a knight of his court to murder him and with that intent got by night into the king's bedchamber. But the king lay elsewhere. He, seeking from chamber to chamber with a dagger in his hand, came upon Margaret Bisset sitting up late at her devotions, who shrieking at the fearful sight of him awakened the king's guard who presently took him.'

The assassin, having started off on the wrong foot in the wrong room, never accomplished his purpose. No self-respecting Plantagenet could tolerate so blatant an attempt upon his life; still less could he leave the instigator in undisturbed possession of the fortress where the plot had been hatched. So a commando was got together, the first time, it is said, that a commando was used, and in secret and darkness they came to Lundy, stormed the castle, and took William prisoner. He was brought to London, where he was hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Lundy's stormy days continued on down through the centuries, until the de Mariscoes faded out. In the Civil War of Stuart days new characters appeared upon the scene, one of whom was Bushell, appointed Lord of Lundy by Charles I. Bushell was a thruster, and it is a pity he left no biography or diary of a practising opportunist, cavalier in purpose and persuasion. A Boswell on Bushell might have set posterity gasping. Bushell did much for the monarch at that time, but it proved a bad debt. When Charles II made his triumphal entry into London, riding a Virginian horse, Bushell sent in a bill for payment. He had the temerity to try conclusions with a king and government departments and the bills he peppered them with would have delighted modern eyes, but the claim was never paid.

By way of a change from potentates and pirates there came in 1625 Turkish corsairs, who stormed the island under the nose of Britain and took away most of the people. Before Queen Anne was dead French marauders captured the stronghold and turned it for a while into a typical Frenchman's creek for privateering.

The highlight for treachery and deceit was reached in 1700 when a party, pretending to be friendly Dutch, came ashore for milk for their sick captain—so they said! The ship stayed for some days and then announced the captain's death, with a request that he should be buried ashore. This was agreed to. The

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crew landed with the coffin and took it up to the ancient church. After prayers, they asked the islanders to leave the church for a moment, saying that they would be readmitted to see the captain interred. So out they went, all unsuspecting, and, a few moments later, the ship's company, armed to the teeth, burst from the building, headed by the 'deceased' captain. The coffin was full of arms. To such depths can treachery descend.

Later, in 1748, came Benson, who added a form of freelancing of his own. He was one of those people who flit across history, but really belong to the pages of fiction. He was of an old family, and a member of parliament, no mean honour in those days, although sometimes acquired by dubious methods. He took up residence in the castle, commenced improvements, built walls, and so on. Somehow or other he got a contract with the government of George II to transport convicts to Maryland and Virginia. But he took them to Lundy, where they built the walls and made caves for smuggling and generally improved the value, if not the tone, of his land. Benson had a sense of humour; when taxed with duplicity over the convicts contract business, he replied that he had kept his agreement with the government—he had transported the convicts overseas!

THE history of Lundy varied between sovereign rights and piratical wrongs, until new types of overlord appeared. The present one is a lover of nature and has turned his island over to the birds, and now it is one of the most inviolable sanctuaries left on earth or sea. Ornithologists who have landed on Lundy are fascinated with the feathered world found there. The granite cliffs provided a safe halting-place for countless birds arriving and departing in their armadas for the New World, for Europe and Africa, long before Columbus took ship from Spain or Sebastian Cabot sailed past Lundy into the unknown. The noise of these bird armies joins the ceaseless orchestra of the surf in a cosmic sky-chorus.

One hundred and sixty-five separate species have been noted on Lundy. The birds are there in thousands—black-backed gulls, herring-gulls, kittiwakes, puffins, shearwaters, linnets, finches, buntings, warblers, waxwings, and a host of others. The Lundy birds are an aerial story of the centuries, a feathered

odyssey of exploration, pioneering, and pilgrimage, with a homing interest thrown in. They arrive out of the night in wind-blown spring months, glimpse a verdant isle that looks good, a journey's end, and here they settle and stay. Some of the terns, the black-backed gulls, and the kittiwakes come from America, while the American golden plover, pre-runner of Flying Fortress and Liberator, is said to have made the two-thousand-mile passage in a non-stop flight.

On Lundy you can see scoter ducks from Iceland, linnets from Canada, song-birds from Africa, and every kind of gull. It is an increasing bird-paradise, with the first prize handed out to the enchanting puffins, whose profile portrait appears upon the island stamps. How they contrive to breed in almost Biblical fashion is a mystery, since they believe in 'only children' and lay but one egg. The puffins have a community sense as highly developed as human beings in overcrowded areas of wartime Europe. Undismayed by total lack of domestic facilities, they fashion their own home burrow, each several feet long, and in some cases to what looks like an apartment house, with entrance-hall, and rooms leading from it. Puffins often share burrows, and doubtless help with the upkeep in terms of fish.

You can examine the peculiar arrangements made by the different birds, and watch them getting breakfast and supper. The amount of fish the Lundy birds catch from the Atlantic runs into hundreds of millions annually, but no one notices any difference. You can watch the marauding tactics of the black-backed gulls indulging in what during the war years many people in Britain would have liked to do—egg-lifting, on a large and unpunishable scale.

You can make the tour of Lundy in five hours, but you will not easily forget this abode of solitude and seabirds, last stronghold of individualism, this sovereign isle set in the pathway of the Western Ocean. Americans and Canadians found Lundy a restful spot—its sheltered combs gay with flowers and ferns, and pouring down them tiny streams of pure water. As I have said, there are no snakes on the island, and the people live without a police force or a lawyer. Domestic economy is simplicity itself. There is no doctor, for you do not need one in such a climate. Blessed Lundy, no wonder those lucky enough to go to you never want to leave you.



A Piece of Wood

J. M. SCOTT

A FEATURE of the Italian countryside is the village set upon a hill, a tall church dominating the tight cluster of little buildings. The original inhabitants must, hundreds of years ago, have chosen the site for protection against human enemies; but their descendants are still paying for this out-of-date security by a ceaseless struggle for existence on steep and rocky ground. It is romantic, but even from the distance of the main road the poverty of the village is obvious. In contrast, the church appears extraordinarily big and fine. And, as one drives by, one may wonder if the size of the church is still a measure of how much religion and the priest govern these people's lives. How, in these material modern times, would they express their true feelings?

Sassinora in the southern Apennines is one of the most picturesque of hill-top villages. But very few tourists leave the main road to visit it. That is just as well, for Sassinora from the inside does not appear so picturesque as it did from a few miles off. To be exact, its hovel houses pressed together and built upon each other's shoulders, its narrow cobbled streets often so steep that they become staircases, its tunnelled ways and blind-alleys would be most attractive as pictures. But the

real Sassinora overpowers the senses. It is bursting with noisy life—squawking hens, shouting children, gossiping women, clip-clopping mules, and pigs which protrude their grunting noses from under what appear to be front-doors.

The only place to find peace and clean air is the piazza, on the crown of the hill. It is quite a handsome cobbled square with the marble basin of the fountain in the middle and the old church rising tall upon one side. The villagers work very hard indeed, going off at sunrise to the stony, terraced fields. But in the cool of the evening most of them walk up and down, up and down on the piazza. This is the social life of Sassinora, and there are strict rules of etiquette. For instance, no one may go arm-in-arm with someone of the other sex unless they are closely related or engaged to be married. Everybody is on best behaviour. Even Zia Maria, the termagant—broad, big-breasted, leather-cheeked, and coal-eyed—now bobs her head politely to the same neighbours whom she has been bossing and scolding at all day. But the warmest welcome is for Father Gironi. Everywhere he goes he is greeted with smiles and raised hats and curtsies and murmurs of *Buona sera*, *Signor Parroco*. On Sunday evening everybody

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strolling on the piazza has attended Mass. At least on the surface, the people are strictly religious and attached to their priest. But only a crisis can show if it goes deep.

ONE evening in the summer of 1943 everybody stopped in the middle of his or her up-and-down promenade. There was a hum of distant motors and, down in the valley, a cloud of dust could be seen above the zigzag cart-track which connects Sassinora with the main road. Soon the German vehicles arrived, crowding the indignant villagers out of their own piazza.

The German major, a stiff and proper young soldier who had been ordered as far as possible to maintain good relations with the local people, went to call on the mayor and the priest, everybody staring at him all the way. He requested, and then demanded, billets for his men. Next day, although the Allies were still a long way further south, he began to fortify the near-by escarpment which overlooked the road.

The villagers resented these brisk, efficient strangers who had broken in on their centuries-old seclusion. But they could not decide on what to do. The priest had always been their guide—and Father Gironi preached Christian patience. It was now that Zia Maria became a personality. She was typical of the people, but with all the characteristics exaggerated; and she had twice the energy of most of them. She was only a widow and childless, therefore unimportant. But in this emergency she proved herself a leader, which was what was needed. The measures she insisted upon were in the tradition of the hard, uncompromising peasant. The men must drive the animals into the mountains to prevent their being commandeered, even if the beasts starved as a result. The women must bar their doors and hide the food, even if they went hungry themselves. The girls were threatened with Heaven knows what punishments if they should fraternise with the Tedeschi; and the children were made frightened of accepting gifts of chocolates, because, of course, these would be poisoned.

It was not a success. The Germans wanted to be friendly. Some at least of the private soldiers—youths of twenty, lonely and far from home—longed for companionship. Finding themselves snubbed and thwarted at every turn they became aggressive. They took what

they wanted by force. Some of the peasants were beaten up when they resisted. A German was wounded, and ten of the leading men of Sassinora were arrested as hostages.

NEXT morning, when Father Gironi was busy in his sacristy, a woman entered. Half looking round he said: 'You want to confess? Go and wait in the box, please. I'll be along in a minute.'

'Confess!' Maria exclaimed indignantly. 'As if I had any time for committing sins! But, Father, you are supposed to guide us, and it's time you did something about the Germans—'

Father Gironi corrected Maria for this approach. Peasant-like, her anger quickly turned to tears, and she left the church vowing in future to restrain her passion. But she must, none the less, have spurred Father Gironi. He took action about the Germans.

What he actually did it is hard to tell with any certainty, for, although he is still alive, he has become a legend. In his quiet, scholarly way he must have impressed the German major, who was the son of a good middle-class Catholic family. Although it sounds paradoxical, he bullied him with his old man's gentleness far more effectively than Maria could have done. The hostages were released and, although the two sides were never friendly, they remained at least technically neutral until the last hectic days when the Allied advance drew near.

Of the dozens of stories about this final period I will quote only one. The spire of the church was the best viewpoint in the whole countryside. In spite of the priest's remonstrances, telephone-wires were led up to the belfry, which was made into an artillery observation-post. But at the critical moment when the Allies were beginning their attack the observers came tumbling down the ladder again. The Sassinora bell was famous: it could be heard for miles. In the belfry the noise must have been stunning—for Father Gironi had tied himself to the rope and was tugging at it for all he was worth.

It happened to be my unit which captured Sassinora, fortunately without civilian casualties or even looting. This was because we outflanked the place, making the Germans fall back quickly. But we found the villagers celebrating their liberation not at our hands but at those of their priest. He had, they said,



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ordered the Germans to go away, and they had meekly gone. He had saved them miraculously.

SIX months later, when the line had advanced far northwards, I was motoring south on leave. I saw Sassinora standing aloof and ageless on its hill, and on the impulse I turned aside there. As a result, my leave was not at all what I had intended it to be, but I heard the end of the story.

After the liberation Father Gironi was treated as a saint. Then, without warning, the Bishop removed him and put another priest in his place. It was considered that Gironi had become too personally important in Sassinora. But the villagers were given no explanation. All they knew was that their much-loved priest had been taken away.

They were more angry than they had been even at the arrival of the Germans—and still less did they know what to do. Maria, since her chastisement, had been quiet and restrained, faithful to her promise to the man she worshipped. But this calamity freed her from her vow. Her tongue clanged out as loud as the church bell. She told the people what to do.

They picketed the church against the new priest. There were no services. No baby was baptised, no child prepared for confirmation, and no young couple married. It was as if God himself were being blackmailed. And yet the Bishop, that high officer of God, did not react at all. Precisely for that reason the strain of defiance became daily greater. The mayor wanted to capitulate. The avvocato suggested writing a letter. But Maria told them there was only one thing to be done. They must go in force to see the Bishop.

The deputation marched down the dusty cart-track and along the main road to the town. It was a hot afternoon. Maria, stout, overclothed, and perspiring freely, led the way carrying a wooden cross which the carpenter had made. If in her secret heart she felt lonely and longed for the wise advice, even the chastisement, of the man who had been removed, she showed no sign of it. She looked the very spirit of just determination, a middle-aged Joan of Arc.

Had the Bishop refused to see the deputation I do not know what would have happened, for they were tired and impatient. But he

came out into the courtyard almost immediately. He was a tall, imposing figure. He reprimanded them severely for their behaviour, but when he saw that this was not sufficient to send them away again, he asked: 'Who is your spokesman?'

'I am,' Maria said.

'But you are a woman,' the Bishop exclaimed in genuine surprise.

'God gave women tongues as well as men, Signor Bishop.'

'That is perfectly true,' the Bishop answered gravely, yet with the suspicion of a smile. 'But did he also give them logical minds? Listen, my daughter. If you can produce one convincing argument that Father Gironi should return as your priest, then it shall be so. If not, you will go quietly home again accepting the new arrangement which, for very good reasons, I have made. Is that agreed?'

'Yes, of course. Signor Bishop is very generous,' Maria answered. Now that she was actually in the presence of the great man she felt clumsy and ill at ease. 'Well, Signor Bishop, it is like this. Father Gironi has been our shepherd for thirty years. We know each other. He has guided us well. He saved us from the Germans. He did miracles. He is the most wonderful person. We love him—'

'Do you worship God or his priest?' the Bishop asked.

Within five minutes he had made Maria appear a fool even to herself. But this only made her sullen and obstinate. 'Listen, Bishop,' she said. 'We have come a long, hot way to get something done. The question is, are you going to do it or not?'

'As I told you,' the Bishop answered a trifle impatiently, 'you must first produce one logical argument. You have touched my heart—your personal loyalty is to be commended. But you have not touched me here,' and he topped his head with his finger.

Maria saw that he was about to conclude the interview. But at that moment she had what she felt was an inspiration. In her tired arms she lifted the home-made cross. 'Signor Bishop, I have carried this at the head of our procession all the way. I am a simple person, not clever at talking. But this holy emblem speaks for the people of Sassinora. It must convince you.'

The Bishop sighed. 'If I carried it, it would be a holy emblem,' he said. 'But in your hands it is only a piece of wood.'

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'Only a piece of wood!' Maria shouted. 'A piece of wood, is it?' She was holding the cross above her head, waving it almost, for she was trembling with passion. Her dark eyes burned. For a moment she was terrible. Then suddenly she collapsed. Still holding the cross, she fell on her knees, crying like a child. 'Father, forgive me, forgive me.'

The Bishop was completely at a loss. For a moment he had been alarmed for his safety, and now the person who had menaced him was abject at his feet. 'Forgive you for what sin, my child?' he asked.

'I—I was about to strike you on the head, Signor Bishop. You said I had not touched your head.' Maria could scarcely speak for her sobs. 'I wanted to kill you, Bishop. It is wrong to give way to passion. Father Gironi told me that, and punished me. But—but you said it was only a piece of wood, and I had carried it so far. Forgive me.'

The cross toppled from her supplicating hands. The Bishop caught it. 'It is very heavy,' he said.

'Father, I know that I have sinned,' Maria went on, not hearing him. 'But the reason for my sin was good. How can good turn bad so easily? There is very much that we people do not understand.'

The Bishop looked at Maria with a sad and gentle expression. The villagers behind her,

in their black Sunday best, stood silent and awed. 'It is I who have sinned,' the Bishop said. 'I told you in my impatience that the cross you carried was not holy because it had not been blessed in a church. But the cross which Christ carried had not been blessed either when he took it up to make his supplication. You have not sinned, my daughter.'

Suddenly Maria smiled. Her eyes and her white teeth shone although her face was wet with tears. 'Bishop, I—I feel happy,' she exclaimed. 'And I am not afraid of you any more now. I cannot see you clearly, but I can see—I can see how it is. You asked if we worshipped God or our priest. We worship God. His lovely house is the only fine thing in our poor lives. But as we go along there are so many occasions when we don't know what to do, so we need a guide. Surely it is better that he should know us and speak our dialect. Father Gironi makes everything clear as day, and we follow him confidently—for has he not given up his life to us and risked death for our sake? But a stranger, however good—life is so short. Let God in his own time take him from us, but leave us together until then.'

The Bishop stooped down and touched Maria's head. 'It shall be as you ask,' he murmured. He did not trust himself to say more.

An Easter Bonnet

*She bought an Easter bonnet,
And chose it with great care;
Of straw and pale-green ribbons,
It was a choice most fair.*

*The first time that she wore it,
Her beau was there to see.
'I never knew how charming,'
He said, 'a hat could be.'*

*She thrilled and blushed with pleasure,
For every maiden knows
She makes a pretty picture
In straw and ribbon bows.*

*A gust of wind came howling—
And never more was seen
The fascinating bonnet
Of straw and ribbons green.*

E. G. Y.



When Royalty Travel

Royal Trains—Old and New

ARTHUR NETTLETON

THOUGH Queen Elizabeth, unlike some of her regal ancestors, is not attended by a Yeoman Bedhanger when she makes an overnight journey, her railway travels up and down Britain nevertheless have a parallel with that old custom. Just as sovereigns centuries ago transported their bed with them wherever they went, so to-day Her Majesty has a mobile bedroom for her convenience when she has to spend the night away from one or another of the royal residences.

This bedroom on wheels forms part of the new royal train which came quietly into existence during the late war, to facilitate royal visits to industrial centres, bombed areas, army camps, airfields, and naval stations. Since the war it has remained in use for peacetime tours, and it carries our Royal Family to Balmoral and sometimes to Sandringham.

The pre-war programme for official tours by the King and Queen was that the royal party became the guests of a noble family on the day preceding the visit, and spent the night in their stately home. Under wartime conditions such entertaining was rarely possible, and security measures also necessitated a revised arrangement. Secrecy about

the royal visit had to be maintained almost up to the last minute, and this could not have been done under the peacetime system.

The four main-line railway companies therefore collaborated in building a royal home on wheels. Comprising day and night saloons, and fitted out, also, as mobile offices, the train served as transportable headquarters for royal tours, and it is still used for that purpose to-day. It obviates the need for the Queen and her consort to become overnight guests in the home of one of their subjects, and greatly simplifies the work of the royal staff in planning royal visits.

The royal party are able to travel comfortably from London to a point a few miles from the start of the tour. The train is run into a siding for the night, and the limousines to be used during the visit pick up the royal tourists there the following day. This royal train, finished in L.M.S. colours, was maintained by that company before the railways in Britain were nationalised, but the other companies contributed towards its construction and have always been at liberty to use it for royal tours in their area. It was taken over with other rolling-stock at the time of nationalisation, but is still normally kept at Wolverton,

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Buckinghamshire, and is always in readiness for a royal journey should it be urgently needed.

THE present train is not the first British royal train, one having been provided for Queen Victoria. That mobile royal home was also used by King Edward VII, by King George V, and by King George VI until it was replaced by the present up-to-date one. Plans for a new train were put forward as early as 1930, but postponements of the project continued until they were overruled by wartime exigencies.

The royal train now in use is not as lavishly appointed as the earlier one, convenience and comfort being the primary concern of its designers. The self-contained saloons—one for the Queen and another for her husband—comprise a sittingroom, bedroom, and bathroom, together with accommodation for a maid or a valet. Upholstered in shades of brown, the sycamore furniture is of simple design and has few ornamentations—in striking contrast with the ornate furniture of the old royal train.

A dining-saloon attached to the train, with an all-electric kitchenette adjoining, also differs in layout from the one which formed part of the earlier train, the table being down the middle instead of near the windows. Incidentally, all the windows of the royal saloons have double panes, thus muffling outside noises and enabling a system of air-conditioning to be incorporated.

Even when travelling, the Queen cannot entirely put aside affairs of state, so a desk-bureau with a telephone stands in her mobile sittingroom. There is, too, a powerful radio-receiver, and a system of electric-bells by means of which any member of the staff aboard the train can be summoned.

Nowadays, however, the running of the royal train is left largely in the hands of the railway officials, and is not subject to royal interference as it was at one period. Queen Victoria insisted that 40 m.p.h. was never to be exceeded. In 1850 her private secretary circularised the railway companies to express Her Majesty's alarm, after a tactless official had divulged in her hearing that 60 m.p.h. had been attained on one stretch to make up lost time. The revelation so unnerved the Queen that she commanded a footman to ride on the engine footplate during the next

few journeys, to see that her orders were observed!

Elaborate precautions in her day, such as the presence of a lookout man every 200 yards along the route, even when she travelled from London to Balmoral, made royal journeys very expensive. It must be pointed out, however, that the cost was met by herself. One of her visits to Scotland cost her nearly £5000 for the return journey, including the hire of the special train, the fares for herself and her staff, and the many safety measures.

Royal journeys by rail are still a heavy drain on the Queen's purse, for she does not travel free, even on official tours. She is charged at special mileage rates for the use of the train, and has to pay full first-class fare for each passenger, plus extras for additional services. It costs her at least £800 to travel to Ballater for her annual holiday at Balmoral, and not less than £200 to go to Sandringham.

Some journeys to Sandringham, however, are made by road, an immensely cheaper way, in her own car. Visits to Windsor, too, are made in that manner, although Queen Victoria usually preferred to go by train and not by horse-drawn carriage. Yet Windsor railway-station still has its splendidly-decorated royal reception-rooms, which served as waiting-rooms in Victorian and Edwardian times. The rooms, which were among the first royal buildings to have electric-light, were built as a Diamond Jubilee gift to Queen Victoria, and were extended at the time of the coronation of King Edward VII. They were last used officially for mourners attending the funeral of King George VI.

DRAWING up the timetable for a royal train journey involves complicated planning, especially to-day, as these runs are subject to just the same snags—the impossibility of maintaining pre-war speeds in safety over track which needs renewing, for instance—as any others. Moreover, it is the Queen's wish that other rail traffic must be interfered with as little as possible.

Minor problems which do not occur in other cases also arise. For example, the number of coaches comprising the royal train is not always the same, so the distance from the engine to the doorway of the Queen's saloon has to be known to the driver, in order that Her Majesty may alight at the spot where the platform carpet has been laid.

THE EGYPTIAN FELLAH

After the timetable has been approved, copies are circulated to stationmasters and other officials along the route, for it is still a rule that every bridge under which the train passes must be patrolled for thirty minutes before the Queen goes by. Guards must be stationed at level-crossings, and railway police are on duty at every station, whether the train stops there or not. The train is preceded by a pilot-engine as a further safety measure.

Driving this important train is naturally regarded as an honour, and, although the privilege is not granted to the same driver each time, only drivers of long service, proved skill, and unimpeachable integrity are selected. The usual pace of the royal train nowadays, where track and traffic conditions permit, is between 50 and 60 m.p.h., and rarely is there any attempt to break records. Yet members of our Royal Family have nevertheless sometimes travelled at record speed by rail. In 1902, the Prince and Princess of Wales

(later King George V and Queen Mary) were aboard the royal train when all previous records were smashed by covering the 246½ miles from London to Plymouth in 3 hours 50 minutes, over 80 m.p.h. being attained on some stretches.

That achievement was widely publicised, but there is one point about British royal trains which usually goes unnoticed, although it reveals how deep are royal traditions even to this day. When the Sovereign goes to Sandringham by rail, the royal party entrain at King's Cross, though normal rail traffic for Norfolk starts from Liverpool Street. This is because departure from the latter station would require the Queen to pass through the square mile of the City, and would involve formalities which must be observed whenever the British Sovereign crosses the boundaries of the area. Rather than request the suspension of these time-honoured rites, Her Majesty entrains at a station which she can reach without entering the City proper.

The Egyptian Fellah

T. KERR RITCHIE

IN Egypt they have a proverb: 'I am a Pasha, you are a Pasha—who's going to drive the donkey?' And the man who drives the donkey in the valley of the Nile is the fellah. His donkeys are not the sleek, whitish Syrian variety, with henna-stained tail and blue bead to ward off the evil eye, which convey tourists to the Pyramids or to Saqqara. Syrian donkeys are expensive, costing anything from twenty to thirty pounds, whereas the diminutive blackish-coloured *baladi* the fellahin prefer are to be had for a pound, and can trot to the souk or market carrying two hundred-weight of cotton on their backs, or push a plough, hitched alongside an ungainly camel, with maximum efficiency.

There are at least twelve hours of sunshine in Egypt every day; in May, June, and July there are more than fifteen hours; and every day the fellahin are to be seen labouring in their fields, while at certain periods they pass there also many nights. The Koran exempts them from observance of the Mohammedan Sabbath, and annually they have only some ten days of fête out of the three hundred and sixty-five.

It might be thought that the fellah would be inclined to mount a soap-box and ask, like the Hyde Park orator: 'Wot abaht the working man? The working man is the backbone of this country, and I tell you strite that backbone 'as got to come to the front!' But the fellah

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steadfastly refuses to come to the front; he lives quite cheerfully in his own humble estimation of the universe; and from time immemorial he has been the backbone of Egypt's agricultural activities.

FOR all his work, the fellah uses his hands and the selfsame primitive tools which are to be seen depicted in the most antique of Egyptian temples or tombs. He does most of his cultivation with the *fas*, which is a clumsy wooden hoe, with one end shaped like a shovel. This implement enables him to break up lumps of soil and generally hoe the ground. It is also used to scoop out tiny irrigation runlets, and to do hundreds of other necessary jobs.

His cumbrous wooden plough weighs about ninety pounds and is generally transported on the back of a donkey from one field to another. It has no wheel, this plough, but a weighty iron-shod coulter and a long guiding-pole sticking out behind, to which are attached the animals who shove it along through the easily-tilled soil. One finds the same sort of plough in Syria, Palestine, and throughout Northern Africa. The fellah sits from time to time above the coulter to help drive the plough into the ground in hard places, but usually he walks alongside, driving his animals by his voice and an odd slap of the hand, having neither reins nor whip.

The fellah may employ a donkey or camel for his heavy work, but his great auxiliary is the zamouse, the native buffalo, of a dirty dun colour like the Nile. The zamouse eats and drinks little, like its master, but the fellahin care more for their oxen or cows than themselves, which is saying a great deal. The female zamouse gives a huge quantity of milk, nearly twice as much as a Jersey cow, while the content of butter-fat is also very high. Further, the meat of the zamouse, male or female, is extremely tender and tastes just like veal.

AFTER the fellah has prepared his land and sown his crop by hand his labour has only begun, because he has to irrigate every inch of ground regularly and the water-supply must never fail in the twenty-four hours. If the water is high up in the supply-canal, this irrigation is done by hand labour. In that case, he scoops a platform out of the bank of the canal and, accompanied by a neighbour,

he gets on to this shelf. Both stand face to face, holding a large watertight basket which they dip regularly into the water and, swinging round, empty it up into the irrigation-channel. This is extremely hard work, and can only be carried on for about three hours at a stretch; then another pair of fellahin come in their turn. In a day of twelve hours some two hundred cubic yards of water will have been raised in this manner, sufficient to irrigate about one acre of ground. This system is called *natala*, and was familiar to the most ancient Pharaohs.

When the water is low down in the supply-canal, the fellah can use a *salal* or endless chain of buckets worked by a zamouse or by a donkey. He may even employ a modern pump. But in the majority of cases he fixes two upright poles like goal-posts, with a bar joining them at the top, next the irrigation-canal. Pivoting in the centre of the cross-bar is a long pole, weighted at one end and with a bucket suspended from a cord at the other. The fellah clambers down to the waterside of the supply-canal and, pulling the bucket down, fills it. Next he gets hold of the weighted end and, adding his own avoirdupois, he hoists the water to the top of the bank, deftly swinging the pole around so that it tips the liquid into the proper irrigation-channel.

MOST marriages among fellahin are celebrated when the Nile is in full spate, and when a child is ill his mother carries him to the river at this period of flood and makes him throw dates into the stream while he cries out: 'Make that I become well and strong, O Nile.' If a fellah is dying, before his last breath one makes him swallow a mouthful of the river water, while to signify profound sorrow the mourners plaster themselves from top to toe with black Nile mud. The dead body is put into the bare earth without either coffin or shroud.

The fellahin are children of tradition and extremely simple. Every piece of work they perform is accompanied by endless merry chants and rhythms, and life for them seems a sheer joy and ecstasy of work, however lugubrious and miserable it may appear to the beholder.

*Ya habibi, ya Muham,
Taaligni fil manam.*

(Oh, my loved one, oh, Muham,
Come and see me in my dream.)



The Wreckers

KENNETH ALLSOP

(John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prizeman 1949)

THE winter bands of siskins were still in the alders, quick green-yellow sparks flickering between the winter-bare branches, when the nuthatches found the tree they wanted.

It was a sycamore that in sixty years had thrust up to seventy feet. In its fortieth year a spore had been floated by a summer wind into a crevice of the sycamore's bark, and there it had sprouted. Season followed season, and a network of hair-thin tubes wormed into the trunk, spreading both upward and downward. As the sycamore grew, so did it begin to die, for the seed that had taken root within it was of a fungus called heart-rot. The wood became brittle, and the tree's end was quickened by the weevils, wood-wasps, longicorn beetles, and goat-moths which laid their eggs upon the infected parts so that their larvæ could eat the tree's flesh. Then had come woodpeckers, green and pied, which had hacked away the flaky wood and snicked out the grubs with their sticky-tipped tongues. Autumn gales had slashed off the tree's crown branches, and its bark hung loose upon it like a scarecrow's clothes. So now the sycamore stood in the centre of the little swampy riverside wood like

a sick man who is afraid to lie down for fear that he will never rise. It was a ruined castle of a tree.

It was that which attracted the nuthatches as they winged together across the humpback bridge that led the motor-road across the river. They were a young pair, born the previous spring, and they had only recently mated in the parkland where they had wintered. In search of territory of their own, they had followed the river on its casual roam through the park meadowland, where celandines had pushed up into the spring sleet. Espying the sycamore, they swung right, across the head of a feeding moorhen, across the twittering band of siskins, and settled on the stump that bore one budded twig, the sycamore's last feeble splutter of life.

Instantly the male began to feed. His huge strong feet scuttered up the vertical branch and his bright brown eyes searched for insects. He saw a spider, swallowed it with barely a gulp, and went on with jerky wavering movement down the sycamore's main fork. But the hen was not feeding. She was examining with absorbed interest the fascinating circular holes that gaped like portholes in the trunk. There were seven.

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Six were old breeding-holes of four different pairs of pied woodpeckers, and in the seventh a brood of green woodpeckers had been born a dozen years before. She visited each, vanishing for a few seconds inside, then re-appearing with a flourish of stubby blue wings. It was as she flipped out of the seventh that her fawn throat swelled and a clear piping note of excitement rang above the siskins' incessant twittering and the see-sawing note of a great-tit in a willow bush.

The hen's call brought her mate straight to her side, for it was peremptory with urgency. She was clamped against the trunk hard by the hole and she fluttered her wings as he landed. Together they entered, and there was room for them both, for the pied woodpeckers, which had hewn it with their heavy blue bills the previous May, were bigger by four inches than the nuthatches. The hole ran straight into the trunk for a short distance, then dropped almost a foot before broadening into a twilight chamber. It was clean and dry. There was none of the swarming insect-life that infests old decayed nests, the fleas and mites and bugs that plague nestlings, the moth caterpillars and the woolly bears of carpet-beetles. There were none of these, because woodpeckers use no material. The eggs had been laid on wood-chips and the fledglings had left them almost unsoiled. While the cock nuthatch clung interestedly to the rugged side of the tunnel, his mate rummaged about in the touchwood among the tiny white fragments of the woodpecker's eggs. She gave a chirrup and half-flew, half-scrambled up to the lip of the hole with the cock at her tail. They were in no doubt about it, this was the right place for their nest.

THREE weeks passed, however, before the hen started the nest. Each night the pair roosted in the hole, and during the day they never wandered far from the sycamore. Each morning the sun's curve was a degree fuller; each day its light increased and its magnetism was felt more strongly by the bulging leaf and flower buds. An old pear-tree at the wood edge became suddenly a snow-hooded mountain-peak. Sloes in the parkland shone with blossom, and magpies prospected furtively along the thorn hedges for places to nest. The siskins had gone, to a plantation of larches on the hillside. The moorhen was sitting tight on ten speckled eggs in a nest

built on a sunken log. Around the sycamore, in the tumultuous undergrowth of bramble and willow, nettle and buckthorn, spindle and red-currant, were new nests—those of song-thrush, blackbird, wren, robin, and duncock. The green woodpeckers had already picked their nesting-site, another sycamore near the humpback bridge. Their bellowing voices rang through the trees a hundred times a day and they began to hammer away at their sycamore, the chips dancing down on to the rising green stems of hemp agrimony and loose-strife.

The nuthatches were happy in their wood. Their clear, cheerful whistles were an integral part of the bird song of the place, and already the sycamore bore signs of their ownership. The cock had selected a crevice on a broken branch for his anvil. Here he brought the berries that still spotted a yew by the fence, small snails, and insects. He jammed them in the crevice and hacked them open, his tubby body rocking on the pivot of his legs. The wrinkles and hollows of the branch were littered with his debris.

It was on the last day of the month, a dull day of nimbus cloud and sharp showers, that the hen began to build. She flew down to a swampy patch and returned to the sycamore with a beak-load of mud. This she carefully plastered within the rim of the hole and then went off for more. All day she continued, placing layer upon layer of mud around the rim, working in a circle, waiting until it had partially dried in one place before adding to the thickness. The excitement in her manner transmitted itself to the cock, and he helped with the cementing—although he made no more than a dozen journeys during the day.

By evening the hole was not recognisable as one carved by a woodpecker. It had shrunk in diameter, so that the nuthatches' plump bodies plugged it neatly as they entered and left. The tacky mud had set into grey whorls: it looked like the pockmark left by a fallen branch. When dawn was only a faint vermilion stain on the night horizon, the hen was busy completing her plastering. The final moulding was done, the final smoothing and trimming, the rounding of the lip and the paring away of rough globules. While she made her last fastidious refinements the cock sat on his anvil branch and sang to her, a song different to his normal piping, a quick and passionate trilling. Often he broke off to display to her, ruffling his flank feathers,

THE WRECKERS

flirting his wings so that their chestnut glowed in the slanting rays of the mounting sun, fanning his white-flecked tail. Twice he dropped from the branch, fluttering down to her with arched wings and outspread tail. And, lastly, he caught a crab-spider and fed her with it. They mated.

Before they left, the hen flew to a solitary Scots pine above the river. She landed on its tall bare bole and wrenched free a fragment of pinky bark. This she carried to the hole and placed it on the floor of the chamber. It was a token—the foundation of the actual nest. Then, almost wing to wing, they flew over the bridge to a full-grown cherry weighed with vanilla-scented blossom. There they fed peaceably in company with a wood-pigeon groaning in the top branches, a chiff-chaff whose unimaginative song was unceasing, and a mouselike treecreeper.

TEN minutes after they left, two strange birds entered the wood with strong, bounding flight, in which their wings were closed to their sides every four beats. They drew lines of vivid colour through the air, for their plumage was piebald and dabbled with crimson. As they landed on the dead sycamore, clamping to the trunk with the impact of hurled knives, the hen, whose neck had no blob of red, set up a sharp clatter, then rained a volley of light blows with her beak upon the bark, so creating a loud and far-carrying drumming noise. The birds were pied woodpeckers, the pair which a year ago had dug the hole taken over by the nuthatches. They had not been in the wood for weeks. At the start of April they had found a gigantic horse-chestnut on the western side of the park. The chestnut had an attractively-decayed limb and in this a month later they had made themselves a nesting-tunnel. While still under construction, it was noticed by a pair of home-hunting starlings. For a whole day a battle, with violent aerial scuffles, raged between the woodpeckers and the starlings, but the starlings had won. Now the cock was perched on a stub of the chestnut, ruffling his oily feathers and stuttering and wheezing, while his mate made the hole a rag-bag of straw, string, and scraps of filthy paper.

After the eviction, the woodpeckers turned back to their old wood. Their first call was at the hole where a year ago they had reared five young ones. The male clung to the trunk,

bending his head about in puzzlement as he examined the shrunken doorway. Then, he pulled back his head and gave a provisional blow with his bill: a chip of mud flaked away. He followed it with another blow, and this time a thick lump flew off. Half-a-dozen more jabs—and there was little left of the nuthatches' work, only a jagged frill like a burst drum. Yet there was uncertainty in the woodpecker's manner. He seemed perplexed, as if unsure if this really was the hole he and his mate had dug, and suddenly, with a harsh tongue-rattle, he shot off with the hen following.

When the nuthatches returned at mid-morning the hen set up a clamour of dismay and agitation when she saw the destruction. She flurried around above the scattered debris. The male showed less distress. He popped inside, assured himself that the chamber was as they had left it, then, displaying more initiative than hitherto, darted away. Almost immediately he was back with a beakful of mud, which he slapped into position. The hen stopped her vacillating. She joined him in a shuttlecock service to and from the river bank, and an hour later the hole had been restored, though less artistically than before.

During the next ten days the curious warfare persisted between woodpeckers and nuthatches. There was no physical clash. The woodpeckers were still uncertain in their plans. They seemed not to have decided where to settle. Every other day or so they scorched into the wood and made for the sycamore. Only twice did they find one of the nuthatches at the hole, and they veered away without attempting to land. But when the nuthatches were absent, the woodpeckers vigorously set to destroying the patched-up façade. And each time the nuthatches, on finding their work again mysteriously wrecked, doggedly put in the repairs.

ON a sultry afternoon in mid-May the hen woodpecker came alone. Her mate was hacking scales from cones in a pine-grove a mile down-river. As usual, she found that the disputed hole had again been cobbled up, and her beak began battering the instant she landed. The mud flicked off, some of it raining on to the head of a sitting blackcap, who shook herself irritably; she was tired of the incessant racket above the bramble-

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thicket where she had her nest. This time the woodpecker did not content herself with exposing her old hole. With a flounce of wings she disappeared inside.

A weasel, which had been hastening through the wood in the hope of putting up a rabbit, leaped in the air with fright and chattered angrily as a chunk of bark missed his ear by an inch. He stood in begging position and stared up at the sycamore. To his surprise, he saw another piece of bark come sailing out, another and another, followed by fluttering grass stems and dead leaves. He shook his head and went prancing on without seeing the woodpecker leave the hole and fly off to the pine-grove.

Upon the nuthatches' return they wasted no time. Again the vandalism had been committed: again it must be put right. By now, it had become as simple as that. Again they made their furious journeys to and from the shallows. It was on her twenty-seventh trip that the hen went inside for the first time. A muffled stutter of rage came from within, for she had found the nesting-chamber naked.

The situation had reached crisis point. All around in the wood there were young birds. A fleet of moorhen chicks paddled furtively about the alder-hung pools. Even the turtle-doves, who had not arrived from Africa until May, now had two shiny eggs on a flimsy twig nest in the hawthorn hedge. And still the nuthatch had not laid her first egg. It may have been that her determination would have collapsed, that she would have deserted the wood and found a safe home elsewhere, had not ownership of the hole been settled, accidentally but decisively, next morning.

While the cock finished off the plastering, his mate began to collect another cache of nesting material. Repeatedly she flew to a decrepit fallen alder and wrenched off strips of wood. She flew until her wings ached, but the task had not been completed by the time the sun dipped from sight behind the distant Chiltern range. Next morning she straight-

away started where she had left off. While her mate skulked away to feed, she ferried over more wood-chips, and then began to weave the lining of last autumn's leaves and soft bents. By midday she had collected all she needed. She was inside the chamber moulding the shallow cup for her eggs when she heard a thump followed by a loud tapping. As she flew up the tunnel she saw a strip of the mud rim break away. Her wings whirring, she shot from the hole like a shell from a gun-mouth into the face of a terrified woodpecker.

The impact knocked the woodpecker backwards. She tumbled down, flapping frantically, banged her head on a branch, and flopped on to the bramble. Worse than the blow was the fright, for it had not occurred to her that within the hole might be the bird whose work she had been systematically wrecking for nearly two weeks. As she hit the bramble the blackcap jumped up, spitting with fury, and dived with lunging beak. Dazed and bewildered, the woodpecker struggled free of the barbs, beat clumsily up, and flew from the wood for the last time that spring.

The nuthatch had not remained to see the result of her half-accidental attack. She, too, had been scared. She stayed with the cock for half-an-hour on the cherry-tree before venturing back. It was with a sense of pleasant surprise that she found no further damage had been done. Only the single chip was missing, and that was repaired in three minutes. For the rest of that day and for the whole of the next she did no more than fiddle uncertainly with the nest. But a strange and wonderful peace seemed to have settled upon the sycamore. There were no more harassing visits from a mysterious marauder, no more interruptions to the plan that had been begun two months before. The following day a white egg, dusted faintly with red spots, was laid in the chamber, the first of six, the beginning of a new family of nuthatches which were to emerge securely into a rich midsummer world.

To the Life

(Author unknown. Greek Anthology, XVI, 129)

*I, Niobe, was once alive; a stone the gods then made me,
Till here from stone Praxiteles alive again displayed me.*

DENIS TURNER.



Peat-Fire Memories

IV.—Muskins and Clams

KENNETH MACDONALD

IN my native village muskins, or razor-fish, were the only shellfish used for home consumption. They could be got only with the lowest spring ebbs in March and April and only villages which had the good fortune to have an *oitir*, or sandbank, near by sought them at all. In fact, there are villages in Lewis which do not know what muskins are. The Scottish local name 'muskin' is obviously an Anglicised attempt at the Gaelic form *muirsgian*, from *muir*, meaning the sea, and *sgian*, a knife—in other words, 'a sea knife,' or, as commonly called in English, razor-fish.

The moment the top of the *oitir* comes in sight men and women wade out while the water is still two or three feet deep in the channel. This is to enable them to spend as long a period as possible on the bank before the tide turns. For the same reason they stay on the bank until it is nearly awash, and then wade across the channel with the water up to their waists, the spades they use being put through the handle of their collecting pails and carried over the shoulder.

THE muskin, particularly if the weather is sunny, comes up vertically to the top of

its burrow and stays there until it is disturbed. The least motion of the sand, and up goes a squirt of water, and it sucks itself down to the bottom of its burrow, about a foot-and-a-half according to the depth of sand. The moment a squirt goes up, that is the sign that a muskin is there, and rapid digging is necessary to keep up with it. Some people put the spade down ahead of the muskin in order to jam it or block its way, but this method breaks the shell, and a person with a pailful of broken shells is the victim of all kinds of smart observations by the neighbours.

Dogs are not allowed on to the sandbank, because they race around and disturb the muskins, which immediately suck themselves right down to the bottom, and this very quickly indeed.

A peculiar custom is that everybody whistles when pulling up the muskin. This is supposed to make it let go its hold and be pulled up more easily. One has to be very careful when pulling out the fish, for it is hanging on for dear life with its sucker and if pulled up too rapidly the meat is left behind and the digger finds himself with an empty shell. So the pull has to be gentle and the whistling must continue. The expert can tell the correct

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strength of pull, for he can feel the muskin letting go its hold. It is more or less like playing a fish. Unless the job is tackled with the utmost patience both fish and line will be lost.

Some people, however, don't take a spade at all. They wade around on the outer edge of the bank where the water is up to a foot deep. Experience has taught them how to get the muskin in the water. When the fish comes to the top in the water it disturbs the sand, and leaves a small saucer-like hollow about two inches wide. The expert recognises the hollow and sees the dark speck in the centre of it, where the small feelers are protruding. Very gently he puts down his finger alongside of it and jams it against the burrow. Even the gentlest touch does this. With the other hand he scoops a little of the sand away until he gets a firm hold of the fish, then with a gentle pull and a steady whistle it is slowly pulled to the surface. He can fill his bucket in half the time it takes the man with the spade, and none of the shells are broken. Three or four muskins can be picked up in this way without moving a step.

A friend of mine who had spent a holiday in the Channel Islands told me she had seen her landlord there get razor-fish by pouring salt into their burrows. I was not sure whether this was a leg-pull, but decided to give the method a trial. So, with the first suitable tide, off I went armed with a small bag of table-salt. The ebb was rather wet and the salt dissolved before it could penetrate into the burrows. However, I found a dry patch and poured a spoonful of the salt into the first burrow I found. A few moments passed and I concluded at first it was not a muskin's burrow at all, but I was soon disillusioned, for up came the muskin and squirted right into my face. My face was quite near the hole, as I was eager to see all that was happening. Down went the muskin again clean out of sight, up again, and another squirt. This happened twice, and I caught a hold of it the third time and pulled it out. As I was there for a meal, and not for sport, I decided two chances were fair enough as the muskin might not come up a fourth time. It would appear, then, that the Channel Islander is one ahead of the Hebridean in tricking the muskin. I rather think the explanation is that the fish finds the pure salt so briny and nauseating that it comes to the top to squirt as much as possible of the unpleasant stuff out of its burrow.

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A RATHER remarkable phenomenon occurs occasionally in Broad Bay on the east side of Lewis. It has only happened twice to my knowledge during the last half-century. The crofters call it *bristeadh na traghad*, or the breaking of the ebb. When it happens, vast numbers of shellfish, and particularly spout-fish, are cast up high and dry by the tide.

The villagers gather from far and near when the news goes round, and everybody, old and young, who can carry any receptacle is there. Women with creels, men with sacks or wheelbarrows, and boys with baskets or pails, gather to get their share of the harvest. Even cartloads of the fish are taken away. The women with the creels and the men with the sacks have the worst time, for the shells being dripping wet soon soak them to the skin. The sea-birds have a glorious time and their squawking can be heard at night miles away.

The older crofters used to say the ebb had become overcrowded with shellfish and this was nature's way of thinning them out. The only two occasions on which I saw this remarkable phenomenon had something in common. The wind blew strongly from the north-east and it was during the spring tides. What I suspect happened was that when a strong nor-easter coincided with a low spring ebb the continuous pounding on the sand of mighty waves shifted the covering of sand and left the shellfish bare at the mercy of the incoming tide.

IN preparing muskins for eating, the crofters first scald them with hot water. This opens the shells and the meat is then easily extracted. It is thereupon put in a pie-dish or casserole with milk and seasoning and left to simmer in a slow oven. The resulting dish is delicious—even better than clams or oysters. The crofters have tried salting or pickling muskins, but after two or three days the flavour is gone. I heard of one instance where a nice-sized pearl was found in one.

Clams, too, are a great delicacy, but they are not so numerous as muskins and they are much harder to get. They never allow themselves to ebb, and even with the lowest spring tides are as a rule in at least a fathom of water. They can be seen lying flat on the sandy bottom.

For the job of catching them a boat is needed and a long pole with at the end a hoop

DRAUGHTSMEN AND DRAWINGS

and net, like a child's butterfly-net. The clams are scooped up from the bottom with the net.

The bivalve shell is partially open when the clam is lying on the bottom, but the moment the fish feels anything approaching, the shell snaps quickly together. In so doing, the seawater is rapidly ejected from the shell, and a kind of jet-propelled hop takes place. The fishermen, however, approach the clams from behind, and the hop just lands them in the net.

The upper shell of the clam is always kept, and one at least can be found in every crofter's

house. It is used to skim the cream off the basins of milk.

Winkles and limpets are very plentiful, but, though an occasional meal may be made of them, they are seldom collected except for bait for the small-line.

The women from the villages skirting Broad Bay used to walk seven to ten miles each morning with a creelful of haddocks on their backs to sell in Stornoway, and returned home with enough bait of limpets, cockles, and mussels for the next day's baiting of the lines, and often while walking were busy knitting.

Draughtsmen and Drawings

DUNCAN STEWART

IF we glance at the 'Situations Vacant' columns of some of our national and local dailies we may be surprised at the big demand for draughtsmen, perhaps amounting to a fifth or a quarter of the situations advertised. Here are a few advertisements for men who can draw, selected from a national daily: 'Senior Draughtsmen required for design of small mechanisms. Must be familiar with up-to-date methods of mass-production'; 'Jig and Tool design draughtsmen for the motor-car industry'; 'Draughtsman for highly mechanised foundry plant'; 'Draughtsman for dairy machinery'; 'Draughtsman for pipework coupled with electrical wiring.'

From earliest times men have used pictorial representation to illustrate their ideas, but a picture of a machine would never provide a mechanic with the information necessary to construct it. He needs scaled assembly and section drawings showing the true proportions of the parts, and the assembly must be taken apart and drawings, specifying the material and finish, must be made for each part.

These drawings are the essence of mass-

production. In the factory they enable the production engineer to plan the manufacturing programme, the estimator to calculate the labour and material costs, and, indirectly, the storekeeper to order the requisite material, and the employment officer to recruit the necessary labour. Before mass-production can commence, however, jigs and tools are required, the jig to hold the part in position and guide the tool to do its work. Designed by special draughtsmen, the jigs and tools of mass-production deprive the worker of the chance to show his skill and craft, and render him a mere automaton. Nevertheless, mass-production has its blessings: similar parts are uniform and can be made accurate to one ten-thousandth of an inch, thus facilitating assembly and enabling manufacturers to supply spare parts which anybody can fit.

NOT all draughtsmen are mass-production experts, although few there are who do not incorporate mass-produced articles in their drawings. The architectural draughtsman needs drawings of window-frames,

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doors, fireplaces, baths, and cabinets, to mention a few of the mass-produced articles used in the construction of a block of luxury flats; and the shipbuilding draughtsman requires drawings of portholes, watertight doors, bunks, pipes, washbowls, and the multitude of things which go to make up a big liner like the *Queen Mary*. Considerable ingenuity is exercised by both types of draughtsman in arranging the networks of pipes, ducts, and electric-cables for the water, sanitary, heating, and lighting services. Any one who has visited a ship's engine-room or a submarine and seen the maze of machinery, pipes, and electric-cables will appreciate this.

The scale of a drawing depends on the size of the object. To get the elevation of a forty-storey New York skyscraper on to a drawing-board requires a reduction to one two-hundredth of the full size. Conversely, small instrument parts about the size of a house-fly must be enlarged ten times, otherwise a microscope is needed.

Designing may be done by a draughtsman of considerable ability, a scientist, or, in the case of a complex electronic instrument, such as a television-set, by a composite team of scientists and designers. It is the draughtsman, however, who knocks their ideas into shape and in so doing sometimes reveals flaws in the design. Generally speaking, draughtsmen are only valuable in their particular industries. This is due to the different scientific principles, manufacturing technique, and materials used in different machines.

Before the advent of photocopying, that is blueprinting, a single drawing served all the men in the workshop. It was a precious affair, picture-framed to protect it from rough usage or oily fingers and hung on the wall for all to see. It was sometimes a work of art, the different materials used for the various parts being differently coloured to facilitate comprehension. In modern mass-production it is essential that copies of drawings should be issued to each person or department concerned in the manufacturing programme, and this is made possible by photocopying. An expensive negative made by laboriously ink-tracing the pencil-drawing on to transparent linen cloth is, however, required. Tracing expenses are obviated in the new photostat process by taking a film of the drawing and enlarging this on tough transparent paper to the size of the original. This enlargement serves as a negative. Drawings

urgently required by installing-engineers abroad can be sent in a few hours by phototelegraphy.

DRAUGHTSMEN are recruited in a variety of ways. Some start as office-boys; others learn machine-drawing at evening schools while serving a workshop apprenticeship. In wartime there is an influx of trainees, and university graduates often serve on the drawing-board to gain industrial experience. Employers are tending to specify the Higher National Certificate as the minimum educational qualification for draughtsmen.

What are the qualifications of a good draughtsman? Besides a good knowledge of his subject, he should be clear both of sight and in presentation, be cleanly and co-operative, possess initiative, and have sufficient enthusiasm to provide a good driving-force.

Draughtsmen are comparatively well paid, but this was not always so. During the inflation of the First World War, when wages of manual workers were rising, salaries of draughtsmen remained almost static until a group of Clydeside draughtsmen formed the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen—the A.E.S.D. The Association rectified the wage anomalies, and its membership has rapidly expanded until there are now about 45,000 members in the United Kingdom and Eire. The Association advocates minimum rates of pay, but maxima are left to the discretion of the employer. In co-operation with many employers the Association circulates to its members a monthly list of vacant situations. It publishes useful technical data, and *The Draughtsman*, a monthly periodical, contains instructive technical articles. The Association is a registered trade union, affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, but it adopts a conciliatory attitude, localises disputes, and encourages local negotiation. Drawing-offices are not closed shops, however; there are plenty of draughtsmen outside the Association.

With the increase in tempo of our daily activities, and the shrinking of the labour force consequent on the declining birthrate, the demand for time- and labour-saving machines should accelerate. The services of draughtsmen should increase accordingly, and advertisements for them become still more conspicuous in our newspapers.



A Korean Story

ROBERT O. HOLLES

I FIRST got in with the American and the Korean at the crossroads a little way to the north of Pyongtaek. That is where the main supply-route breaks and heads in two directions to the north.

I was hitching a lift to the forward marshalling-area after a spell in a base-hospital with malaria. The road, if you can call it a road, was a winding dirt-caked track, which wandered about in the hill-country for a while and then came down very steeply to run straight along the valleys where the rice paddies lie. There is always traffic—jeeps, G.M.C.s, and three-tonners—and in response to my signal a jeep stopped.

There was an American driver in front, and in the back a Korean in U.S. combat uniform—he must have been an interpreter. 'Jump in, bud,' the American called out. He was quite young, with a fair moustache—that much I noticed—and when I got up on the jeep beside him he started off with a grinding of gears.

There wasn't much conversation on the journey that I remember. The American was chewing gum with a vague sort of unhappy look on his face. Occasionally he spat over the side or made a remark out of the corner of his mouth. Once or twice when the truck lurched, he swore.

The Korean said nothing at all. He was leaning back in his seat, when he wasn't being jerked out of it, and smiling in the rather apologetic manner of his race, as if he had something to atone for and was sorry about it and wanted to create a better impression in the future.

We had gone about thirty-odd miles when the driver pulled off the road and stopped in a clearing near the place where a town had once been. I don't know the name of the town, and it doesn't matter, because it was never an important town and now there are only a few level acres of rubble and charred wood and twisted pieces of galvanised iron, half-hidden under a heavy blanket of dust—level, that is, except for the chimney.

There had apparently been a brewery in the centre surrounded by outbuildings and a cluster of native huts, for a number of large vats were visible under the wreckage, and a pile of rusting machinery lay at the foot of a chimney which reared up over the ruins of the town, scarred and ugly, incongruous like a thumb on a hand from which all the fingers are missing. There was a faint smell of earthiness and decay about the place. It was a familiar enough sight, and one which had become almost complementary to the Korean landscape.

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'You get kind of thirsty.' How about some coffee?' the American said.

I said I thought it would be a good idea. The Korean was already groping in a haversack, and he presently climbed out of the jeep and lit a small fire with petrol in a hollow scooped in the ground.

While he was brewing the coffee the American and I walked around to get rid of the cramp which comes from sitting too long in a confined space. The American did most of the talking—about how he was due to be rotated out of this 'goddam country' in the near future, about his home in Minnesota, and about what he was going to do with his life when he had 'gotten out of the army.' He was rather excited about it.

WE both caught sight of the boy at once as he came suddenly running out of the centre of the grey mass of the wreckage, running towards us. The boy ran barefoot over the broken masonry, and as he drew near I could see that his clothing was a filthy, tattered rag of an overall. A naked shoulder was visible, with the collar-bone a gaunt ridge pressing against the skin. Under the grime of his face the skin was yellow-hued and stretched taut, like the parchment of an old manuscript in a museum. His head was too large for the emaciated body which carried it; the black, cunning eyes peered out of their wrinkled slits, missing nothing.

He approached with no sign of diffidence, and stopped five yards off, regarding us with his head cocked to one side, with a strange air of detachment about him, like one purged of all emotions, not concerned with human feelings, in whom only the bare instincts to survive remain. 'Chop-chop,' he repeated in a thin pleading voice. 'Chop-chop.'

'The kid sure looks hungry,' the American said.

The Korean got up from his coffee-making and made an angry gesture at the boy. 'Kara-kara!' he shouted. 'Kara-ka-ka!' He picked up a chunk of broken masonry and hurled it, as one throws a stone at a carrion-crow on a seedbed; but the boy made no move to go, only shifting his position slightly so that the missile fell harmlessly behind him.

The American walked slowly back to the jeep. 'Poor li'l bastard,' he said. 'This ain't no place for a kid.' He looked thoughtful, as if he might have been thinking of other

kids, elsewhere. . . . He rummaged under the back-seat and brought out a packet of sweet biscuits. 'Ida-wa!' he shouted.

The boy advanced eagerly, but became hesitant when he stretched out his hands to take the biscuits, with an air of semi-belief. His dark eyes were very mobile. He half-snatched the packet from the American, and then suddenly made a lightning move with his free hand. I saw the American's head jerk back in surprise, and then the boy was gone, running, leaping, swerving over the wreckage of the town. 'Get that kid!' the American hollered. 'He's got my watch!'

He started to run in pursuit, stumbling over the uneven ground. The Korean jumped to his feet and followed, moving very fast. I started to run also, after the first instant of the shock, making a wide detour, hoping to head the boy off.

I kept my eyes on the fleeting, scarecrow figure of the boy—there were very few places to hide in among those devastated acres—and the American, who was beginning to lose ground. But the Korean, moving round on the far side, was gaining.

The boy kept turning his head as he ran, and after a while he seemed to be tiring, and his movements were becoming jerky and disjointed as the Korean closed the gap. He turned, changing direction, and started to head back towards the centre of the ruins where the chimney stood.

I realised that he would soon be passing across my front and I crouched under the remains of a flimsy wooden wall, waiting. After a few minutes I heard him scrabbling through the rubble, and he came into view about forty yards away as I stepped out of hiding.

The shock of seeing a fresh pursuer caused the boy to stumble and fall, and I noticed that he dropped the biscuits. He ran on, limping slightly, with a scarlet stain spreading on his bare leg. I closed to within twenty yards, until I could hear the whistling intake of his breath. I began to feel sick of the whole business, wanting only to retrieve the watch and finish the chase, and I put on a desperate spurt. The boy slipped through a lane between the wreckage of the brewery and went like a hare for the chimney. He gained it with a ten yards lead, swung himself up on the lowest of the iron staples which were built into the outside, and mounted rapidly. I stood at the bottom and watched him

A KOREAN STORY

climbing, climbing, with only an occasional pause for breath.

A large kestrel, which must have been nesting in the top, launched itself silently into the air, flew swiftly around the chimney in a wide circle, alighted neatly once more, and walked round the edge, cocking its head to look below.

THE Korean arrived, and shortly afterwards the American, labouring his breath. We all stood looking up. The chimney was about eighty feet high. The boy was still making for the top. 'For Chrissakes!' the American said incredulously. 'Can you beat that?'

One of the staples must have been loose and the boy's weight forced it out of the brickwork. It came clattering down, and we all scattered, expecting the boy to follow, but he was swinging on the next one higher up, and with painful slowness he hauled his body up to it and crouched there like a scared animal. We could hear a faint whimpering.

I said: 'We've got to get him down—somehow.'

'Yeah,' said the American. 'It ain't gonna be so easy.'

I glanced at the Korean. He was still smiling to himself, and making little patterns in the dust with the toe of his boot. I began taking off my jacket. The American said: 'Wait a minute, fella, this ain't your party. Ah'll get the little guy down.'

I produced a coin. 'We'll settle it this way.'

'If we gotta argue about this thing we better be all in it together. Listen, Kim,' he said, turning to the Korean, 'somebody got to git up there.' He pointed upwards. 'Maybe you go—okay?'

The Korean shuffled his feet. 'I go—okay,' he said. 'I understand.'

The American pulled three twigs from a shrub, turned about, and faced us again with the twigs protruding from his clenched fist. 'Pick,' he said. 'Smallest takes.'

I chose the centre. The Korean's twig was larger than mine. The American was left with the smallest. A look of determination crossed his tense face.

The Korean grinned, studying his twig, as if the whole business was an elaborate joke. 'I go,' he repeated. 'I go.' He shivered in the keen wind which blew down the valley.

'Say, are you crazy?' There was a trace of bitterness in the American's voice. 'I said "smallest takes".'

'I go,' repeated the Korean. 'I speak to the boy—maybe he come down okay. You speak—he not understand.'

'He's right,' I said. 'The boy will be scared of you.'

'Yeah,' said the American. 'Yeah. Maybe he's got somethin'.'

Then finally he said: 'Okay, you better go up. Only tell the kid we jus' wanna help—tha's all. Tell him we ain't gunnin' for him any more. Tell him he can keep the watch. Ask him about what happened to his folks—any goddam thing—but don't frighten the kid. Understand?'

The Korean nodded vigorously. 'I understand,' he said. 'I speak.'

The Korean was full of intense pleasure in his responsibility. His brown-stained teeth were bared in a wide grin. Perhaps he simply revelled in playing the leading part in the rescue, like an understudy getting the big chance; but I began to feel as I watched him climb that he was representing his race in a dramatic scene of his own from which the American and myself were excluded—as mere spectators.

THE Korean folded his pile-jacket and placed it at the foot of the chimney. He rubbed his hands together, placed his foot on the lowest staple, and started to climb. He climbed steadily but with the utmost caution, sometimes stopping to take stock, looking upwards to where the boy was, a few feet from the top.

Once he stopped, and we could hear him talking to the boy, but there was no reply, and he climbed on. I wondered what the boy would say if he did speak. I knew it would be a familiar story. One time I lived for six weeks in a tent with a man named Sykes. Sykes had a gramophone and only one record, and time enough on his hands to play it sixty times a day, until I threw it into a well. I felt there would be the same sort of sickening familiarity about the story of the boy's life.

The first tragedy would have been the arrival of the soldiers from the north—the little men with their hearts full of the glee of destruction. Then the bombing and the gunfire, and the guts torn out of everything which seemed solid and indestructible, like

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the brick walls of the brewery. And afterwards the starvation and disease, and the evacuation, and the freezing winter, and the bitter struggle to remain alive.

The American and I stared upwards, until my neck ached with the strain and I had to look away. I watched the American's face which was puckered with anxiety. Suddenly it became contorted into frozen lines of horror. He shouted: 'Look out!'

I looked up instinctively at the Korean, who had just started to fall. His body was stretched out in mid-air, one foot on a staple, and the arms flailing. He toppled over and fell away from the line of staples, hitting the ground with a solid, sickening impact on the spot where we had stood a second before. He must have fallen about thirty feet.

We went to him and turned him on his back, and he began to shout unintelligibly in his own language.

'Easy boy. Take it easy,' the American said. He forced a flask of brandy between the Korean's lips, which caused him to cough and splutter, and he tried to get up, but we held him on the ground. With my small knowledge of first-aid I saw that his right leg was broken, and I tried to straighten it and set it in splints made out of slats of wood torn from the debris of a ruined house. During this operation he passed out, and we carried him back to the jeep and made him as comfortable as possible on the double-seat at the back. Afterwards we walked rather slowly back to the chimney.

THE American remarked as we looked up at the small protruding hump which was the boy clinging to his perch: 'Suppose we get the hell out of here, maybe the little guy will come down on his own.'

I said no, I didn't think he could make it.

'Guess I don't reckon so, either,' he said.

I reached in my pocket for a coin and tossed it up while the American called. I lost. He said: 'There ain't no hurry. We got all the time in the world.'

I started to climb very slowly, testing each of the staples with my full weight before mounting the next. They were about two feet apart, eaten by rust which fell off in a fine powder and got into my eyes. The brickwork of the chimney was chipped and scarred. At one point there was a large wedge-shaped hole, as if somebody had tried to hack the masonry

down with an axe. The American shouted occasional words of encouragement. 'Keep it going, bud. Take your time.'

As I climbed higher, the wind got up and rippled in the loose folds of my shirt. I could hear it blowing down the inside of the chimney with a hollow drone, like the euphoniums in a town band. After what seemed like a long time I stopped to rest my arms and looked down. The American was lighting a cigarette. I saw the flare of the match and then the white oval dumpling of his face as he looked up.

Beyond the rubble of the town the view stretched to the far hills rising on all sides, dappled with bare and blackened patches where the surface had been blistered with napalm and blasted by high-explosives. The terraced paddy-fields were jigsawed across the valley where the main supply-route was an ugly weal running across the landscape. Before my eyes the whole vista shimmered in a haze, and then began to turn cartwheels, faster and faster, until finally breaking into a thousand shattered fragments. At the last moment, as my hold on the staples faltered, I turned inwards and hung on desperately until the fatal dizziness faded. I heard the American shout out in alarm. After an interval I continued climbing. I knew then what had caused the Korean to lose his grip and I did not look down again.

As I got steadily higher and nearer to the boy, I noticed he had stopped the whimpering we had first heard, and was crouching quite still. I caught an occasional glimpse of the hawk on top of the chimney as it walked along the parapet.

Eventually I reached the missing staple, just below the boy. The wind was blowing strongly in short gusts, and the American shouted something, but the words did not carry. I started talking to the boy, softly, so that he would not panic. He remained crouched in a catlike attitude, his head turned towards the chimney. I talked for a long time, pleading, cajoling, using all the Korean phrases in my vocabulary, to no effect. The daylight was beginning to fade into the red dusk of the Korean summer.

Finally, in anger and desperation, I shouted. I cursed the boy fluently in short bursts of savage energy. The hawk gave a harsh quark of alarm and swooped around us in three or four close circles, before alighting once more.

THE WEIRD WORLD BEYOND THE SOUND-BARRIER

The boy peered round and down, and began to shift his position. I shouted encouragement. His thin frame suddenly shook with an outburst of sobbing. I began to talk quietly again, trying to soothe his fear, making him realise that I was there to help. At last I gained his confidence. I talked to him in a mixture of English and Korean and sign-language, and told him what he had to do.

He eased his body down over the four-foot gap until I could grasp his legs with my free arm. One of his legs was caked with the blood that oozed from a gash below the knee. I went down, an inch at a time, supporting his weight, down to the next staple. The wind threatened to pluck both of us from the scarred face of the chimney. I wondered, all the time, whether the kestrel was going to attack.

After a long struggle the boy came down over the gap, and was sitting on the staple

below. I started the descent, and he followed me down.

I staggered a little as I reached the ground. The feel of solid earth underfoot was something I had once taken for granted. The American greeted me like a relative he had not seen for a very long time.

We watched the boy descend to the bottom. He jumped the last two staples, dodged past us, and limped away through the debris of the town, disappearing like a wraith into the twilight.

'That watch,' the American said, 'it never was any sort of a good timekeeper.'

Neither of us grudged the boy his spoils, at that moment. He would sell the watch to somebody else for the few dollars it would fetch, and with the dollars he would buy a little rice. Maybe the rice would keep him alive for a short time.

The American took the flask of brandy from his hip-pocket. It was good brandy.

The Weird World Beyond the Sound-Barrier

GEORGE HOWARD

OVER many parts of Britain the peculiarly penetrating clap of man-made thunder which marks the passage of an aircraft through the sound-barrier has become a commonplace. To attenders at aeronautical shows it is just a scientific trick typical of the age of speed in which they live. 'Supersonic' has become an overworked adjective. A public, satiated with scientific wonders, glibly comments on speed faster than sound and passes on to the next thrill. Yet the world these pioneers of the air are entering is quite as important and as wondrous as that which Columbus saw from the *Santa Maria* or Galileo scanned with his telescope. It is exploration in a new dimension.

Mechanically, hitherto-undreamed-of speeds became possible with the invention of the jet-engine. With a propeller-driven aircraft the theoretical maximum speed at sea-level is 760 m.p.h. No matter how fast the blades revolve the air cannot stream past them faster than that, and, because of resistance to the air by the wings and body, the actual maximum speed must be much below this figure. With the jet-engine, however, theoretical speeds soar into huge figures. A mixture of petrol and air will give a speed of 4800 m.p.h., while liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen will propel any non-resistant body through the air at a speed above 11,500 m.p.h.

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The human factor is therefore the greatest problem in travel in this new supersonic world. First and foremost man's brain cannot work fast enough to control machines travelling above 1500 m.p.h. Already British and American research is replacing the human brain with electronic apparatus, but this in its turn brings problems of weight and size. Like the pilot, the apparatus has to be kept in a refrigerator, for speeds above sound create heat through air-friction.

THE problems of maintaining human life at these high speeds of the future are being tackled at the Institute of Aviation Medicine, at Farnborough, Hampshire. Most of the work is secret, but not long ago one of the scientists there, Squadron-Leader F. Latham, revealed a few of the known facts about supersonic flying.

High-speed flights will be made at great heights—as much as twelve miles above the earth. Pressurised and refrigerated cabins will be needed. If the aircraft skin broke, death would occur instantly, for the blood would boil and all but the toughest areas of skin would fly off. Quite apart from such an accident to the machine's protective covering, the pilot's life is endangered by the quixotic stresses set up in gravitation at these speeds. Even in the late war tests were made with machines in which the pilot lay flat, controlling his aircraft by means of mirrors. This helped to prevent the loss of blood in the head which produced a type of mental anaemia where every effort was slowed down and even such simple things as counting above twenty became too much. Now Farnborough has designed gravitation suits which automatically inflate and compress the pilot's lower limbs and stomach to assist the blood-supply to the heart and brain.

It should not be thought, however, that flying above the speed of sound is always a physical misery. If such was the case, then high speeds would be solely a war effort, while the facts are that at least fifty per cent of present planning is for supersonic passenger aircraft. Faster-than-sound flights will be normal on transcontinental routes by 1960.

Neville Duke, Britain's leading test-pilot of supersonic aircraft, has said that passage through the sound-barrier carries no physical sensation. 'The only indication that it has been achieved is the reading of the instrument dials

in the cockpit,' he said. All aircraft passengers can realise this is true. On B.E.A. flights at 2000 to 3000 feet the sensation of travelling at 180 m.p.h. is poor by comparison with 60 m.p.h. in a car or train. At 10,000 feet in a Comet 400 m.p.h. does not seem so fast as coasting down a hill on a bicycle. In a pressurised cabin, and if the speed is attained gradually, with the aircraft flying in a straight line, most of the physical sensation disappears.

One aircraft in America has already been flown at twice the speed of sound, it is claimed by official sources, though the period of time involved was not stated. It was probably a momentary burst of high speed, which Britain's own test-pilots have also attained.

WHAT are the problems that beset designers of aircraft which have to pass the sound-barrier? At speeds over 600 m.p.h. the wing of the aircraft strikes the air-currents, and accelerates them slightly as they flow over the leading edge. The flow of air is then moving roughly at the speed of sound, and some of it is smashed up by the sound-waves. Thus a tremendous turbulence begins to affect the smoothly-running air-current, and control is difficult.

The power of these sound-waves combining with the air-flow is very great. If the aircraft speed is not quickly changed, vibrations can tear the strongest metal to pieces. The invisible force will search out the slightest flaw or irregularity of surface, take it in its grip, and shake it until it falls apart. That is why streamlining on high-speed aircraft has to be absolutely perfect, even to removing patches of dirt or blobs of paint. The United States Army Air Force experts inspected the wing of a P.80 jet-fighter which had landed with dents all over the metal surface. Minute traces of dirt in one dent revealed that the cause of the trouble was a dead gnat. On another occasion a pilot in the same type of fighter fired his guns while travelling at 600 m.p.h. The gases from the muzzles were caught in the sound-waves from the detonations and whirled round and round the machine until the whole aircraft broke up. The pilot in this case was able to get out and parachute to safety.

The speed of sound varies according to the temperature and pressure of the atmosphere. On a summer's day in Scotland it is about 765 m.p.h. at sea-level; in winter it is a little less. The speed drops steadily as one climbs higher,

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until it is only 640 m.p.h. in the rarefied air eight miles above the earth. To overcome the difficulty of stating this varying speed aeronautical engineers now talk about Mach numbers. Mach 1 is the speed of sound in the air where the aircraft is moving. The machine's speed is expressed in relation to this number. Thus a machine moving at 350 m.p.h. in air where the sonic-barrier is reached at 700 m.p.h. is said to be travelling at Mach .5; at 525 m.p.h. its Mach number is .75; and if it could reach 875 m.p.h. its Mach number would be 1.25.

THEORETICAL interest is now concentrated on the weird phenomena which present themselves when a machine passes backwards and forwards through the sound-barrier. Much of man's conception of time is based on sound, and the realisation that he can now catch up sound, pass ahead of it, slow down and listen to it again raises questions which defy the imagination of even an H. G. Wells.

As one boffin of the Government's research establishment at Farnborough said to me: 'The opportunities for bizarre experiment are limitless. Some conceptions worked out on paper give one a glimpse into a world where past, present, and future are inextricably mixed.'

As an example, one has to imagine the existence of enormously powerful loud-speakers capable of transmitting messages several miles. Passing over them, the

passenger flying in an aircraft would first of all hear the message normally. As speed increased, the words would come more slowly. Another machine, travelling at the speed of the sound-waves, would hear nothing at all as it moved away from the loudspeakers: the waves would never catch up with sufficient force to impinge on the ear. A third machine, travelling at twice the speed of sound, would hear the message backwards, catching up with each sound-wave until it reached and overtook the first vibration of the first syllable. If the machine then slowed down, the message already heard would come through a second time, on this occasion in its right order and quite coherent. Were the sound-waves sufficiently powerful, there is no technical reason why the message should not be heard over and over again simply by moving faster and slower all the time. The super-loud-speaker to make this possible will never be invented, but the aircraft for the super-speeds envisaged is already here.

The world that is being glimpsed on the threshold of the sonic-barrier is a vast zone of silence surrounded by yammering, terrifying noise with fiendish powers of destruction. Shakespeare wrote of 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.' Many of the pioneers who have explored this new territory of time and space have indeed not come back. But the work to which John Derry and Geoffrey de Havilland devoted their lives lives on. Like the great explorers of old, they have pioneered the way so that one day ordinary people may follow.

Window Dressing

*Fair, fresh, and vital as the April morning,
She knelt, intent upon the bride's adorning,
Adjusting falls and foam of glistening white,
Rapt in the task that seemed her grave delight.*

*Impossible in pose, cold, willowy, waxen,
The tall doll simpered under curls faint-flaxen,
Yesterday modelling some tailored style,
And now transformed by fashion for the aisle.*

*But ah, not she the cynosure; we lingered
To watch the girl, oblivious, dainty-fingered,
Kneeling the train's each fold in place to lay—
Her pretty self so apt for that array!*

W. K. HOLMES.



Building a House in the Country

ANNE BLYTHE

BUILDING a house in the country usually begins with a dream, and if you have been nursing one—picturing your own little place with your own bit of land—much has happened in the past year to cheer you on your way. Development charge has gone, civil building-licences are now granted automatically for small houses and bungalows, and those for larger houses (up to 1500 square feet) are easier to come by.

But you still can't buy a nice-looking piece of field in your chosen area, hire a builder, and begin. You may never be able to do that in Britain again, and perhaps for the sake of the countryside it is a good thing. Private building, although freer than it has been since 1939, is not by any means free—certainly not in the country. As a dreamer who has just built her own house, watching it grow from a dog-eared plan into solid bricks and mortar, I know that only too well.

First of all there is the business of finding land, and, although the country seems to have so much to spare, it isn't as easy as it looks. There are plenty of 'desirable building plots' for sale in developed areas, but if you want to be alone with an open view, there's a long hunt ahead of you. All the best-looking spots are on agricultural land, where your little bungalow, no matter how charming, will not

be permitted at any price. Even if it is a piece of land that nobody else seems to want, there may be no main services available, and you will not be allowed to build a house unless there is water, electricity, if possible, and preferably all the main services. So, even if it looks like your idea of Paradise, don't buy any land until you have found out from the local authorities if you would be allowed to build there; and the type of building permitted—bungalow, two-storeyed house, business premises; and the number of dwellings to the acre.

ONCE you have your site, or at least an option on it, you can do something about the house itself—but only with the approval of the local Town and Country Planning Committee. They, representing the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, control the position and design of every house built in Britain to-day, and there are also Ministry of Housing sanitary regulations and local building bye-laws to be observed too. For instance, every new house must have a bathroom and a larder of minimum dimensions, and there are regulations controlling the cubic area of bedrooms, the position of drains, the size of cisterns, and so on. There

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are also standards of building quality and quite rigid rules, varying according to district, about the outside appearance of a house.

You may have strong personal ideas on the type of home you want, but, unless you are very talented and knowledgeable about the regulations, it will be necessary for you to have the house planned by a qualified architect. The best way is to get him to survey the site and to create a design to suit it—and you. But do consider the landscape carefully. There is nothing more unhappy and unbecoming in the country than the stereotyped urban villa stuck in an open field. Make the most of the views you have, and remember that among fields and hills the long shallow elevation is always more graceful than the narrow-frontage style that is necessary in a town.

The architect will know by experience what kind of house is likely to be approved by the local Planning Committee, and he will keep his plan within the statutory limits—1000 square feet, if you want an automatic licence; 1500 square feet, if you apply for one on your housing need. The smaller size will give, roughly, two public-rooms and three bedrooms; the larger, three public-rooms, or two large ones, and four bedrooms. Extra space will be allowed for a garage, but its design must be submitted to the Planning Committee too, so get the architect to plan it, even if you do not build it immediately. You can, if you like, plan a house in either size for future extension—the main part to be built this year, the addition next. Or if you have a household of more than six persons in genuine need of a new home you can seek permission to build a house up to 1750 square feet. But you must have a good reason, family or business, for anything bigger than the statutory house.

Altogether, six copies of the plans are needed, and you should allow from four to six months for them to make their way through all the various authorities who must approve them. Here it does pay you to employ a local architect who knows exactly when each committee sits and the type of architecture they consider suitable for their locality. House designs are, for better or worse, approved or rejected by local committees who generally favour traditional rather than contemporary architecture. Don't waste time, then, submitting a flat-roofed house for the New Forest or mock Tudor

style for the Peak District; they will both be rejected.

Unfortunately for the builder of a country house, no extra area is allowed for the larger kitchen and storage accommodation that rural housewives need. But if you use your space intelligently, it is wonderful what you can get within the limits. In our house, a family size of three public-rooms and four bedrooms, we saved some valuable space by putting the coal and wood stores right outside the building and having, instead, a little laundry-bay and drying-cupboard next to the kitchen. Our broad site, four acres in all, allowed us to build a long low house with all the main rooms facing south and only kitchen, bathroom, hall, and landing to the north.

The simpler your plan the cheaper the building will be, so cut out fancy gables and ridges and the trimmings that used to be thought necessary on a small country house. Your building price will be controlled in any case, roughly to the price for which the local council could build a house of the same size. Do not, then, waste any of that money on expensive 'features.' Simplicity will pay you, in more ways than one. We found that it was cheaper to install central-heating than to build fireplaces and chimneys for the bedrooms, and that fitted wardrobes used hardly any more of our precious timber allocation than unnecessary picture-rails. So we had the useful things, and cut out the ornamental, and our house is more attractive in consequence.

THE architect usually recommends a builder, but if you are building in the country do pick a country builder—a man who knows how the prevailing winds blow, how bricks and tiles weather, and how footings should be cut to suit the soil. The ideal plan is to have your house built by a man who lives in the district and who, for the rest of your joint lives, will not be ashamed to meet you and the house he built for you. All the better if he employs local labour, so that each bricklayer and tiler, carpenter and painter will be your neighbour and take a pride in the job he does for his own village. It helps a great deal in the future if the craftsmen who made the house can maintain and repair it, and you are certainly more likely to get a good honest job from a local builder employing local labour than you are from a big contractor who may never be in your

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district again. Your bank will make sure that your builder is sound financially and he, if he is a countryman, will build your house with a kind of fatherly pride not very common these days.

One of the joys of our house-building adventure was that we knew not only each man on the job, but his wife and family as well. The local carpenter made our front-door to our own design, the blacksmith made the furnishings for it, and the bricklayers built up, on the site, each brick and tile fireplace; and all the time we had the wisdom of the master-builder who knew, by fifty years' experience of building in this part of the country, where the rain and the wind would strike us, how this plaster and that paint would stand up to local conditions, and how the water would affect the plumbing system.

Of course, everyone for miles around will take a proprietary interest in the house, and the site will be visited daily by all the old worthies. You will learn from them too, and, although they may know nothing of architecture and labour-saving gadgets, you may save many a mistake just by listening to them. Our town friends are always faintly amused that our loggia is at the south-east corner of the house rather than at the more usual afternoon sun spot at the south-west, and wonder why we made that mistake. But it is not a mistake, in our district, where the south-west winds blow from the sea and you go to the east side of a hedge for sun and shelter.

BECAUSE of lower building-charges, cheaper land and rates, your house in the country will cost you less than a similar one in town. Ours, built in Hampshire two years ago, cost £3000, including a four-acre small-holding we are developing round it. It is in a very rural area, yet the site has water and main drainage, gas and electricity. A house of the same size with no more amenities built in a suburban street cost over £5000, including a narrow site.

But if you build in the country and make your living from the land, you have the extra expense of outbuildings, of making paths and fences, and of laying out the ground.

You have to store a great many things in large quantities—fuel, potatoes, garden-tools, bicycles. The rations may be small, but your larder, far away from the shops, must be big. You must provide hanging-space for wet mackintoshes and, if possible, a place where wet clothes can be dried, and, even if you have a bathroom upstairs and a cloakroom down, you will find it a good idea to add an extra lavatory and wash-basin somewhere near the back-door, where it can be reached without going into the house at all. Cement your yard and pave your paths, and arrange your outbuildings, when you build them, so that you can reach them from the house dry-footed, and dry-headed too, if you can.

Roughly, it takes about ten to twelve months to build a single house—as apart from a house in a row of new buildings—and, once you have moved in, it will take you about the same time to get settled and begun on the task of laying out your garden. But you will have all the old country customs to encourage you. When the roof-timbers go up, the carpenters will hoist a Union Jack where the chimney will go. That is a sign for you to stand beer all round, and the men will drink the health of your house and of the family who will live in it. If you fail to take this hint, on the morrow the Union Jack will come down and up will go a black flag! In some northern counties you provide, instead of beer, a 'rearing supper' to all the men who reared the house, and you are suitably toasted at the local inn.

In the West Country no owner of a new house would move in before he had planted a rowan-tree to guard his house from evil. In some districts it is a yew, and preferably a cutting from the yew at the old house. Neighbours who wish you well will offer you cuttings from their cottage gardens, and everybody will be delighted if there is any sign during the building that yours will be a lucky house. Ours began with two good omens. The young labourer who dug the lime-pit found a sixpence two spits down, and one of our small daughters, on the day they cut the footings, tripped over a very old horseshoe. The blacksmith made it into a knocker for the back-door!



Jane Decides

CHARLES R. POOLE

'WELL, no,' said Jane Hackett reflectively, speaking in the detached voice of one who is not seriously concerned with the subject, 'I can't say I've thought much about marriage yet. It's really a question of meeting the right man, isn't it? And when I do meet him'—she laughed deprecatingly—'he may not ask me!'

She smiled provocatively at the two infatuated young men who sat on either side of her, glowering jealously at each other. She was perfectly aware of her power over them, and that she could have either by lifting a finger. But she was young and piquantly pretty and in no hurry to commit herself.

'No fear of that,' said Wilfred Boreham gallantly. 'And whoever he is, he'll be a lucky fellow.'

Chris Trimble, coming in a lame second behind his glib rival, murmured: 'Luckiest fellow alive, if you ask me.'

'And who,' demanded an irascible voice from behind an evening paper, 'did ask you, young man?'

The paper was lowered to reveal the bristly hair and permanently-inflamed visage of Colonel Hackett. He was a formidable person, with his loud, authoritative voice and parade-ground manner. Chris always felt like

a raw recruit in his presence. 'When my daughter marries,' he boomed, 'I hope she'll behave like a sensible gel and be guided by her father's advice.'

'I'm twenty-one, Dad,' Jane reminded him demurely.

'And I'm sixty-one,' barked her parent, 'and I know what's best for you, my gel. It's my duty as your father to see that you make a decent match and don't throw yourself away on any young fellow that comes along.'

He turned a bloodshot eye on Chris, who was painfully aware of the implication of his remarks. If Jane gave no clue to her feelings, her father at least made no secret of his views as to the respective eligibility of her two suitors. In his eyes the possession of a wealthy uncle, able and willing to advance his nephew's prospects, weighed the scales heavily in Wilfred's favour. Chris, as a very junior partner in a firm of provincial architects, still had his way to make in life, but Wilfred's future in business was assured.

'Well, I'm sure,' said Wilfred smoothly, 'she couldn't have a better adviser than you, sir, with all the experience of men you've had. Experience, as my Uncle Hector always says—' He paused, catching a peculiar look in Chris's eye.

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Chris was getting a little tired of hearing what Wilfred's Uncle Hector said. Wilfred was always dragging his name into the conversation, hinting at his ample means and extensive business interests, and quoting his opinions as authoritative. But it suddenly struck Chris that, though Wilfred claimed to be a favourite of this opulent relative, they had only his word for it. 'Pity,' he observed meaningly, 'your uncle never comes to see you. I'd like to meet him.'

'We'd all like to,' concurred the Colonel heartily. 'Why don't you invite him to come and spend a few days with you, Wilfred? Your landlady's got a spare room, hasn't she?'

'Yes, do try and persuade him,' put in Mrs Hackett, a little, faded woman who seldom spoke. 'We should be so delighted to see him.'

A trifle hesitantly Wilfred promised to write. 'But he's a very busy man,' he reminded them. 'His time is valuable. I shall be surprised if he's able to come.'

'We'd all be surprised,' said Chris. He glanced at Jane, in whose eyes he thought he detected a gleam of amusement.

LATER, making his way back to his rooms, Chris reflected disconsolately on the unfair distribution of uncles. Some fellows had uncles who were a credit to them and able to impress potential fathers-in-law, while others, like himself, had uncles who were no credit to anyone—such as his Uncle George, for instance.

He did not know why Uncle George, particularly, should come into his mind just then. But when he entered his sitting-room he felt that there must have been something psychic about it. Seated in his favourite chair, smoking tobacco from his jar, was an untidy, shabbily-dressed figure with sparse grey hair and a wispy beard.

'Well, Chris,' Uncle George greeted him, with a wave of his pipe. 'How are you, my boy? Where've you been? I've been waiting here half the evening for you.'

'What do you want?' asked Chris bluntly.

Uncle George looked pained. 'Well, I thought perhaps I could stay with you for a day or two, but you don't sound very welcoming.'

'I don't feel it,' said Chris. 'I suppose you've been up to something as usual?'

Uncle George confessed that there had been

a spot of trouble at home. A trivial matter, it appeared, hardly worth mentioning. 'But the way Alice and Gert kept going on at me, I thought I'd better get out of their way for a few days. If I were to tell you what my own daughters said to me—'

'You needn't,' Chris interrupted drily. 'I can guess. Is that my tobacco you're smoking?'

'It's some I found in this jar,' replied Uncle George, unabashed. 'I knew you wouldn't grudge your old uncle a pipeful.'

'Well, you can't stay here. There's only a single-bed in my room and there's nowhere else you can sleep.'

'Oh, I'm not particular,' said Uncle George accommodatingly. 'A shakedown on this sofa will do for me. And if it isn't comfortable I'll slip into your bed when you go to work in the morning and have my sleep out. I never was one for starting the day early.'

Chris resigned himself to the situation. Setting aside the fact that Uncle George was determined to stay in any case, it was too late to do anything about it that night. He rang the bell and asked his landlady to bring in some supper.

NOW a widower, Uncle George lived with two unmarried daughters. He had always been a sore trial to his family. He was idle, shiftless, and irresponsible. There was nothing to be said for him. But his persistent and engaging amiability, which nothing disturbed, was disarming, and Chris found it difficult to resist for long.

He was not proof against it now. During supper, his uncle having given him a plausible but mainly inaccurate account of his rift with his daughters, he found himself unburdening his own troubles. Uncle George learned of his uphill courtship of Jane, her father's opposition and the cause. He listened sympathetically and said he wished he could help. 'But I thought you young people didn't take much notice of parents nowadays. That Hackett certainly seems to have his women-folk well in hand.'

'He has a very forceful personality,' said Chris. 'Overpowering. They seem afraid to go against him in anything.'

Uncle George suggested: 'I'd like to meet him.'

Chris hesitated, thinking of the probable effect on Colonel Hackett of Uncle George's

shabby and impecunious appearance. 'Well, I hardly think— He's not a friendly type, you know. You see—'

Uncle George checked him with upraised hand. 'Say no more, my dear boy. I understand perfectly. You don't want me to meet your friends. I am not, you think, sufficiently presentable. I—'

'Oh, all right,' Chris cut in hastily, defeated. 'If you feel that way about it, I'll take you round with me to-morrow.'

COLONEL HACKETT was not a man to hide his feelings. When they called on the following evening his expressive eye roved over the seedy figure of Uncle George with manifest disapprobation. Undeterred, however, by his frigid reception, Uncle George took a seat beside him and sought by agreeable conversation to win him over. It was uphill work until they got on to the topic of the Colonel's grievances against his landlord, a subject that was almost an obsession with him, when Uncle George's cordial and sympathetic agreement with his views caused the atmosphere to thaw appreciably. 'Scandalous state the place is in,' the Colonel declared. 'Come outside and have a look at the roof.'

They stood at the back of the small lawn, looking up at the roof, while the Colonel continued to fulminate against a landlord who refused to share his tenant's views of his responsibilities.

Uncle George, gravely disapproving, observed that it was false economy to let property go like that. With a sidelong glance at his host he added: 'I'm always careful to keep my own in good repair. That's sound sense. Saves money in the end.'

The Colonel looked at him with awakened interest. 'So you own property yourself?'

'A tidy bit,' Uncle George answered modestly. 'Know Southbury?'

'Not very well.'

'All my money is locked up in property there. Let me see, there's Prospect Terrace by the river—ten good houses those—that row of twelve cottages in the Fosdyke, the ironmonger's shop and the stationer's in the High Street. Fine properties, and all in first-class condition.'

The Colonel made a rapid mental calculation. 'Really,' he said, with a slight cough, the sceptical nature of which did not escape Uncle George. He laughed deprecatingly.

'Ah, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking I don't look as if I own much of anything. You're right. My family are always on at me about it. But Chris will tell you I never was one to bother about appearances.'

The Colonel could comprehend this. He knew personally of rich men who made a foible of dressing shabbily either out of meanness or as a defence against the importunate. Even millionaires, he had heard, had been known to dress like tramps. Mellowing, he observed that it was nice to be able to make provision for one's family. 'You—er—mentioned a family?' he probed.

'Lord, yes!' Uncle George heaved a sigh. 'Two sons and three daughters. But they're a great disappointment to me. They think of nothing but what they can scrounge off their poor old dad while he's alive and what they'll get when he's gone. What they think they'll get,' he corrected. 'They'll have a shock when the time comes.' He lowered his voice to a confidential note. 'I'm leaving the shops to Chris. I'm very fond of Chris. He's worth the lot of 'em. But this is strictly confidential between ourselves. I don't want Chris to know anything about it. I shouldn't like him to grow slack in his profession through knowing there's money coming to him.'

The Colonel nodded and smiled with responsive understanding.

When they came back into the room Chris noticed that the Colonel's eyes rested on him with a warmer regard than he was accustomed to and that his manner was friendlier than usual. Perplexed, he glanced at Uncle George. But questioned later as to what had passed between them, his uncle was not disposed to be communicative. 'What were we talking about outside?' he repeated blandly. 'Mostly about you, Chris. I took the opportunity to put in a good word for you.'

'What did you say to him?' asked Chris mistrustfully.

But Uncle George refused to be drawn. He patted his nephew encouragingly on the shoulder. 'Now, don't you worry, Chris, my boy. You make the running with the girl and leave that Hackett to me. I've got his measure all right, and now I've got him in a good mood towards you, it's up to you to get the girl.'

The fact was Uncle George had a shrewd suspicion that Chris, if told of his deception,

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would react unfavourably and refuse to play ball. Never able to resist the temptation to turn any situation to his own advantage, he decided to defer the disclosure of his clever stratagem until Chris was safely married to the girl, when surely some fiscal recompense for his help could reasonably be expected.

WHEN Chris and Uncle George called on the Hacketts again a few evenings later, Chris, with eyes only for the enchanting Jane, did not at first notice in the room, seated in an armchair, an elderly man whom Wilfred introduced with pride as his Uncle Hector.

Uncle Hector was bald, stout, and prosperous-looking, austere of eye and pompous in manner. He was a complete contrast to Uncle George. The antipathy between the two was instinctive and immediate. They shook hands warily, taking each other's measure. Uncle Hector, in particular, eyed Uncle George with a fixity of gaze which seemed to indicate suspicion. 'Haven't we,' he asked pointedly, 'met before?'

Uncle George repudiated the suggestion, adding in an undertone that was perfectly audible to the other that he was rather particular about the company he kept.

Uncle Hector was not the man to evade so patent a challenge. He flushed darkly and awaited an opportunity to retaliate. It came when Colonel Hackett made a chance reference to Uncle George's property. Chris, absorbed in conversation with Jane at the other end of the room, did not catch the remark, but an outsize snort from Uncle Hector made him turn his head sharply. 'Property!' scoffed Uncle Hector, with a contemptuous laugh. 'Bah! Who wants to own property nowadays?'

'And what,' challenged Uncle George, bristling, 'is wrong with property?'

'Everything!' pronounced Uncle Hector with decision. 'What with the high cost of repairs and all these restrictions nobody in his senses would invest his money in property nowadays. Now, my money is all locked up in good, sound, go-ahead business ventures.'

'Huh!' sneered Uncle George. 'Ever heard of businesses failing? They do, you know. Up one year and down the next. But bricks and mortar are always there.'

'Poppycock!' said Uncle Hector brusquely. He seemed annoyed at having his opinions questioned. 'I ought to know what I'm

talking about. I've made every penny of my money myself and never had a ha'porth of help from anybody.'

'Well,' said Uncle George judicially, gazing at the ceiling, 'I can't see that's anything to brag about.'

'I was not bragging,' shouted Uncle Hector, turning a mottled pink. 'I was merely stating a plain, unvarnished fact.'

'Have it your own way,' said Uncle George equably. 'I'm glad to say I never was a money-grubber myself.'

'Money-grubber!' choked Uncle Hector, and retaliated with a caustic reference to lazy parasites. Uncle George riposted with a scathing allusion to greedy profiteers. Both made it unpleasantly clear to whom their remarks were intended to apply.

The atmosphere was tense. Uncle Hector's face had become alarmingly red. Uncle George's wispy beard jutted out at a belligerent angle. Chris saw that there was only one thing to be done. Jumping up, he announced firmly that they must go.

The Colonel was shocked into silence by such unseemly conduct on the part of his guests. His suffused face was eloquent with suppressed emotion. But as he made his hasty farewells Chris met Jane's cool, amused glance and was relieved to find that she at least did not take the episode too seriously.

OUTSIDE, Uncle George, chuckling unashamedly, remarked that he guessed he had given the old windbag one or two for himself. Chris was too angry to say much just then, but back in his rooms he expressed his views freely.

'Couldn't resist it, my boy,' said the impenitent Uncle George. 'It was too good a chance to miss. I never could stand the pompous old ass.'

'Never could— What do you mean?'

'We've met before,' as he said. 'Didn't you notice the way he kept looking at me? He knew he's seen me somewhere, only he couldn't place me. It was years ago when I was down on my luck and doing a bit of clerking for Sprockets, the big grocers in Southbury, where he lives.'

Chris stared at him. 'I didn't know you ever had a job in Southbury.'

'I didn't have it long,' Uncle George confessed. 'But while I was there Borcham used to come in the shop sometimes, throwing his

weight about and treating everybody like dirt. Once or twice he spoke to me pretty sharply at the pay-desk. I couldn't answer him back then, but I guess I got a bit of my own back to-night!

'You were abominably rude,' Chris told him. 'What do his views on property matter to you, anyway? Anyone would think—' He stopped abruptly as certain expressions used by Uncle George in the heat of the argument recurred to his mind, assuming a significance which had escaped him at the time. He fixed his uncle with a searching look. 'Now, look here, Uncle George, what have you been up to? Some trickery, I'll be bound. Come on! Out with it!'

Uncle George wilted slightly under his nephew's accusing eye. 'Not trickery, Chris. I wouldn't call it that.' His tone was mildly expostulatory. 'Purely in your interests I had recourse to a little harmless subterfuge, that was all. As things have turned out you'd better know about it. The fact is, my dear boy, I didn't think it fair you should be on the wrong side of that Hackett merely because the other fellow had a rich uncle and not you. So I decided to provide you with one. I told him I owned a fair amount of valuable property in Southbury and was leaving a good slice to you!' With a dry chuckle he added: 'He swallowed it all right. That mercenary sort will swallow anything to do with money, the way their minds run on nothing else.'

Chris gazed at him, flabbergasted. 'What on earth possessed you to do such a lunatic thing? You must be crazy!'

Uncle George said reproachfully: 'I was only trying to do you a good turn.'

'Good turn! What d'you think Colonel Hackett will say when I tell him, as I shall have to, there isn't a word of truth in your story? If I know him, he'll take it out of me. He'll say I put you up to it and then thought better of it!'

Uncle George considered this, rubbing his nose reflectively. 'I see what you mean. I'm sorry, Chris. My idea, of course, was that he shouldn't be told until after you'd married the girl. Then it would have been too late for him to do anything about it. It seemed,' continued Uncle George, fiddling with his sparse beard and looking unhappy, 'a good idea at the time. How was I to know that old Boreham would turn up to spoil it all? Where I made a mistake was in giving the addresses of those properties in Southbury. Living

there, he's sure to ferret out who actually owns them. He'll give me away to that Hackett and—well, I think perhaps I'd better not call there again.'

'You certainly won't!' Chris promised him grimly. 'You've done enough mischief as it is. You'll go home to-morrow. I'm sorry I ever let you stay. I might have known you'd behave badly.'

'I don't know what you mean by behaving badly,' said Uncle George, affronted. 'I was only trying to help you. Of course, I don't expect any gratitude, but you might at least give me credit for my good intentions.'

Faced, however, with the prospect of explaining away Uncle George's good intentions to the formidable Colonel Hackett, Chris saw no reason to feel grateful. He parted from his uncle next morning without regret.

IN the evening Chris paid an early call on the Hacketts. He was anxious to get his disclosure over before Wilfred or his uncle turned up.

The Colonel took it badly. He prided himself on his judgment of men and it galled him to think he had been taken in by anyone like Uncle George. His voice shook with anger as he said: 'Are you telling me that when he said he owned shops and houses in Southbury he was just filling me up with lies?'

'I'm afraid so,' said Chris apologetically. 'But I don't suppose he meant it that way. He likes to feel important and he lets his imagination run away with him. Besides, he's got an impish sense of humour. Pulling your leg like that was probably his idea of a joke.'

'Joke!' spluttered the Colonel. 'Joke! First time I've heard it suggested that telling lies and deceiving people was funny! Nice sort of family you belong to, I must say! I've no use for plausible old humbugs like him, nor—he glared at Chris—'for people like you who encourage them.'

'That's not fair, Dad,' Jane put in quietly. 'You've no right to make Chris responsible for his uncle's behaviour.'

'And who else is responsible?' demanded her irate parent. 'Who brought that disreputable old fraud round here, telling lies, amusing himself at my expense, and insulting my guests? It's about time you understood where you stand with me, young man. I don't know why you're always hanging round here, but if it's my daughter you're after—'

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'Dad!' interposed Jane protestingly. 'You be quiet, gel! It's about time this young man knew where he got off. You're not my idea of a son-in-law, young fellow, and you may as well know it. I've got other views for my daughter.'

'I know,' said Chris. 'You've made that pretty plain.' He felt his temper rising. 'I don't know what you've got against me except that I haven't any rich relations to sponge on and make things easy for me. Personally, I prefer it that way. I'd rather stand on my own feet and make my own way in life by my own efforts.'

'Fine sentiments!' the Colonel sneered. 'But I'm a practical man and look at things in a practical way. Now I'll be glad if you'll leave my house and it'll suit me better if you don't come again.'

'Very well,' said Chris shortly, rising. 'It's your house.'

As he moved to the door he glanced at Jane. She gave him a brief, ironic smile, but said nothing. He went out with a heavy heart.

CHRIS had scarcely left the house when the street-door opened again and he heard light footsteps behind him. 'Wait a minute, Chris,' said Jane. 'I'll walk to the end of the road with you.'

As they walked along the quiet, deserted road in the pale twilight she said: 'I just wanted to tell you that I liked what you said just now about standing on your own feet

and making your own way in life. I don't think it does a man any good to be always relying on what other people are going to do for him. Besides, it's so—spiritless!'

'Your father doesn't think so,' said Chris gloomily.

'No,' agreed Jane briefly. There was an almost imperceptible edge in her voice. After a moment's silence she burst out: 'Really, Chris, there are times when you positively exasperate me!'

'Ex-exasperate you?' he faltered.

'When you say things like that. If I were a man,' said Jane, elevating her chin and speaking very distinctly, 'and keen on a girl, I don't think I'd waste my time worrying over what her father thinks. I should find out what the girl thinks!'

Sudden illumination came to Chris. He stopped dead. 'What a fool you must think me! You mean that if you—cared enough for a chap you'd—you'd—'

'Follow my own inclinations? Of course I would—if I had a good enough reason.'

He caught his breath. 'The only reason I can give you,' he gulped, 'is that I'm desperately in love with you and want to marry you more than anything in the world!'

'Well,' smiled Jane, 'that's not at all a bad reason—No, not here, Chris,' she whispered hurriedly. 'Meet me in the Park to-morrow evening at seven and we'll talk it over!' She kissed him lightly on the lips, and was gone. Wilfred, rounding the corner with his uncle at that moment, was just in time to see it.

At Death of Day

*When eventide becalms the dying day
And birdsong seems to swell to sweeter tones,
The rising mist curls gently through the trees
And softly shrouds the lower meadow-leas.
A turquoise pool of clear translucency
Is deeply set in smoke-hazed lavender
As passing day withdraws the warmer hues
Of sunset colours from the paling sky.
A silken grace is in the dark tree-shapes
And mystery in Chinese silhouettes
Of twigs that pen black lace against the mist
Or drift their dusky nets across the stars.
The moon's white yacht then proudly rides the tides
Of flowing night, as its besilvered sails
Embrace the failing breath of day's cool death.*

BRENDA PHILLIPS.



Rationing the Grass

The New Technique of Strip-Grazing

KENNETH OCHILTREE

THE two young farmers were discussing strip-grazing. After the manner of a certain type of otherwise very worthy young farmer in these enlightened days they were inclined to be just a trifle pontifical about it, and to use very long words. One of them announced: 'There's no disputing that strip-grazing, carried out on a strict input-to-output defined ration reduced to a grazing-time factor, is the very last word in the optimum economic utilisation of grass.'

The old boy in the other corner of the railway-carriage—just as obviously a farmer of the old school as they were of the new—had plainly been getting restive for the last quarter-of-an-hour. Now he could keep silent no longer. 'What the devil do you think your forefathers were doing,' he snarled, 'when they tethered a cow on their grazing and got a wee laddie to move it every day? And your Highland crofter to-day, and millions of so-called illiterate peasants throughout Europe? "Last word." Pah!'

Unfortunately, at this point the train chugged into my home station, so that I was unable to eavesdrop further, which was a distinct pity, for agricultural arguments are always good fun, even when you are strong

enough to resist the urge to quit the side lines and jump down into the arena, and nearly always they are rewarding. I was particularly sorry to miss the further development of this one, because this subject of controlled grazing, which is very much in the farming eye these days, is certainly one of those upon which, in my opinion, you want to assemble a great deal of information, and to assess the experience of as many other folk as you can, before coming to any definite conclusion. It is one of these modern agricultural techniques which are not quite as simple as they sound.

THE primary purpose of controlled grazing is just to make the most of your available grass, which, as the old boy in the train pointed out, is simply what the peasant is doing with his tethered beast. Between that tethered beast and the 'defined ration reduced to a grazing-time factor,' however, there lie quite substantial areas of only partially-explored territory, and a host of questions of quite considerable complexity.

Controlled grazing has come into being through the conjunction of the electric-fence and the need and desire to make the fullest

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use of grass. Because the electric-fence allows you to confine beasts with a single wire, quickly strung up on a few light and easily-moved posts, where formerly you had to use a four-, five-, or six-wire fence properly stapled to full-size stobs with straining posts and all, the whole taking days to put up and pull down, you are now able to achieve a degree of control over your grazing operations which was utterly impracticable before. And because the oilcakes, made largely of imported feeding-stuffs and in the past the principal sustenance of your beasts, are now so hopelessly expensive that you simply cannot afford even the very limited amounts that your coupons will permit you to buy, and because modern agricultural science has taught you so much about the correct use of grass, its tremendous food-value when properly used, and its equally tremendous wastage when not efficiently exploited, you want to exercise that control. So there you are. You want control. The electric-fence gives it to you. Everything is perfect. In most of the very extensive writing on the subject it is all rather like that—beautifully straightforward and simple. But, in practice, there are apt to be snags.

In the good old days before I had anything to do with farming you simply calculated, on the basis of past experience, tradition, rule of thumb, or what have you, the number of beasts you could safely put on to a given field of so many acres. You then put them on, and expected that field to keep them going the whole summer, or part of the summer, if you had another field in reserve for them to move to after they had finished the first. You had, as always in farming, to gamble on the weather. If it were such that the grass grew strongly and 'got away from' the beasts, it was just too bad for you: you had a lot of wasted grass, unless you had more beasts somewhere to put on, which, nine times out of ten, you had not. If, on the other hand, the grass did not grow, and keep on growing, up to normal expectations, it was just too bad for the beasts—and for your milk-yield or beef-increase: you were suffering from the all too common lack of grass. And since the amount of risk you can afford to run with the possibility of starving beasts is strictly limited the common tendency was to understock as an insurance against starvation.

The very occasional farmer who was lucky enough to have a lot of small grass fields, all fenced and watered, was in a fortunate posi-

tion, because he could hold some fields in reserve against a bad season, and, if he did not need to graze them, he could take a hay crop off them. When silage-making became common practice his position was even stronger, because, while hay is an extremely chancy crop, and must be taken at one definite time, silage is practically a certainty if properly handled, and can be taken, in one form or another—young grass for protein, older grass for bulk—at more or less any time. Such farmers were, in fact, employing a rudimentary form of controlled grazing.

IN its simplest form the modern technique merely employed the electric-fence to divide one big field temporarily into several small ones, which were used much as the paddock owner had used his. There were, of course, complications of water-supply, but they could be overcome by the use of temporary tanks, or by lanes to the permanent trough and gateway. Nevertheless, there was still waste. Your dairy-cow, for instance, did not fully clean up one section before she had to be moved on to the next if her yield was to be kept up. So the dry cows and young stock were brought in behind the milkers; and everything was moved around a bit faster. And as the stock moved on, the grass in the sectors grew again and, later in the season, would be ready for the stock to come back to. It would grow faster if it received a liberal dressing of a nitrogenous fertiliser: so it got that, and the rhythm of change increased accordingly. And, after you had had a bit of experience, you could roughly gauge the rhythm and the amount of grass available ahead of you, so that in the early part of the season you could take a fair gamble and cut one or two of the farthest-out sectors for silage before the herd ever came to them, knowing that, after dressing, they would grow again sufficiently before they were needed.

The most economical method of obtaining your sectors, both in wire, and, much more important, in labour time, was obviously to put your electric-fence right across the field, parallel with one of the boundary-fences, to form your first sector, and then, when the herd had finished that, to move the electric-fence forward a similar distance, closing up behind with another wire to seal off the grazed sector for dressing and regrowth. From this practice real strip-grazing has developed.

RATIONING THE GRASS

This is based on the grazing habit of the cow, which, of course, only spends a limited portion of its time actually cropping grass. If she, and her companions, are given a much wider area to graze in than they require at the moment they will range widely, cropping a bit here and a bit there, soiling a wide area, and lying about all over the place. So the wise men developed the practice of giving them a small area of actual grazing in the fresh pasture-field and providing, contiguous to it, a 'lie-back' field of old pasture, and low food-value, probably cropped more or less bare, but preferably dry and sheltered, with a water-trough, to which Madam Cow, after she had eaten her fill, might retire to lie in comfort, to chew her cud, and to meditate upon the wisdom of her owner.

As the technique developed, the new sectors for actual feeding in the pasture-field became smaller and smaller, which meant that the electric-fence was being moved more and more frequently, and the area ahead of the cows waiting for them to come on to, or being cut for silage, and the area behind them being dressed and growing up again, were larger and larger. The net result, claim the strip-grazers, is more efficient feeding of the cow, better pasture, more silage, and infinitely less waste. The most advanced technique of all, reputedly based on actual experiments with high-yielding cows, only allows the herd to graze on the feeding pasture for the briefest of periods. By teaching the herd in the hard school of experience, the experts claim that they have got cows to crop their entire food requirement within some extraordinarily short period—I admit, freely, that I have forgotten what it is, and, anyway, it is of purely academic interest as far as I am concerned, because we are far, very far, from that stage yet—so that they spend all the rest of their time lying down, at peace with the world and themselves, to the intense benefit of their milk-production.

NOW you must agree that all this sounds simply wizard, as my small son would say. And you will doubtless ask why, along with every other farmer who claims to have any sense and any enterprise at all, I do not immediately rush to adopt the full technique of strip-grazing in its most advanced form.

Hanging my head in shame, I admit that I am only tentatively finding my way among the earlier stages—moving the electric-fence across the field at comparatively wide intervals (certainly not daily, and most certainly not on the short-time-on-and-long-time-off principle), and cutting the far end of the field for silage only when I am practically dead certain that we have four weeks' feed ahead before we come to it. I am hopelessly timorous, I know, and I concede all, or practically all, the theory of the experts, but I have not yet got round to regarding the individual cow as a unit in a collection of units which are just machines into which you put so much grass in so much time and out of which, as a result, you get so much milk. They must be regimented, I know; but I feel there is a limit to that regimentation. And, weakling that I am, I cannot turn a completely deaf ear to my herdsman's threatening growl: 'If ye cut the hale tap o' the coo-park for silage whit's gain' tae happen to ma beasts next month gin we get a dry spell, as weel we may? Ye may think there's a puckle meat the noo, but wait ye till three weeks are by an' it'll be a gey different story!'

Controlled grazing is a *sine qua non* of good farming to-day. There is not the faintest doubt about that. The young farmer in the train who was after 'the optimum economic utilisation of grass' was on the right track. But there was a very wise old man—or was it, perhaps, an auld wifie—who once said: 'Ye maun creep afore ye gang.' I may be in the right of it, after all, taking the business kind of cannily at the start.

The Midnight Oil

*The student's light,
The student's mind;
The many casements
Dark and blind:*

*Yet Love may pass,
But never go
To tap the window
Lighted so!*

JAMES MACALPINE.

Twice-Told Tales

XXVIII.—Mr Killwinning's Third Wife

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of April 1853]

MR KILLWINNING rose. 'Ladies and gentlemen—but especially the ladies—I entreat your compassionate and patient attention to what I am about to say. I find myself in a somewhat embarrassing position—I've done a singularly bold thing; I've invited you to a wedding, in the hope that a certain lady would honour me with her hand; and I have yet to ascertain whether I'm to be triumphant, or to suffer defeat. As you are all pleased to call me eccentric, you will, I know, make eccentricity my excuse; but at the same time, my dear ladies, in the present instance at least, allow sincerity to be coupled with it. The fact is, I have—in plain words—for some time past been looking out for a wife; but among so many accomplished and lovely women, I could scarcely presume to hope—' (Every face beamed with an encouraging and radiant smile towards Mr Killwinning at this compliment.) 'And if I am to be rejected when I name the lady—and she is in this room, at this present moment'—the greatest excitement now prevailed, with a faint cry from the little Potters of 'Hear' (here?), but whether the verb or the adverb, it were indelicate to guess—I confess that my presumption deserves rejection; and she shall have her revenge on the spot by a public refusal.' (Here Mr Killwinning most provokingly began to beat about the bush.) 'I doubt if I should ever have had the good fortune—the young lady will pardon my presumption in venturing to say *good fortune*, until I know my fate—were it not that there appeared to be a tacit agreement among her female friends, that she was "born to blush unseen"; and the gentle, quiet resignation, with which she seemed to enter into this very prejudicial arrangement was to me, I confess, the most fascinating charm that ever lovely woman possessed. Of all others she is the one, and the only one, I would select for a wife;

and, eccentric though I be, I feel assured that even her delicacy will pardon the mode in which I thus testify to her retiring, unobtrusive worth, even though it be fatal to my present pretensions, and, I fear, ruinous to my future happiness. I conclude by proposing—no; by respectfully offering my hand and fortune to your youngest daughter Ellen, Mrs Clacket.'

A very audible 'Oh!' burst from all the ladies at once. Ellen was on the point of fainting, but was supported by her astonished sister; Mrs Clacket, in a state between laughing and crying, was giving Mr Killwinning's hand sundry convulsive squeezes. Mr Killwinning's speech had made all the ladies in love with him, though no one could tell how the proposal was received, for Ellen, her face buried in her handkerchief, was led from the room. Mr Killwinning, now really looking the picture of unhappiness, followed; and then of course all tongues were loosened, and Mr Killwinning's singular declaration loudly discussed.

'A most indelicate proceeding!' exclaimed young Flint. 'The girl's feelings are outraged. Of course, she'll refuse him.'

'Yes; but what a triumph!' said the envious Miss Jenkins. 'Who could have possibly conceived that he meant Ellen Clacket?'

Just at this moment, the door of the inner apartment opened, discovering Mr Killwinning rising in rapture from his knees, pressing the hand of Ellen to his lips. He led forward his blushing bride—attired, too, like a bride, a magnificent marriage-veil being thrown over her; Mr Killwinning having taken the precaution of sending to London for a bridal *trousseau*, on the chance of its being required, together with a special licence; while the Rev. Mr Tithe—ever had been prepared to act upon it by performing the ceremony.



The Best Days of My Life

V. C. WALTER

AS I stood on the top of the four broad granite steps leading to the hall-door I had absolutely no feelings of anticipation, either pleasurable or otherwise. Surely I must have been the dullest, most unimaginative child who ever approached her first term at boarding-school.

Father had frequently assured us that these would be the best days of our lives, and he should know, for he had gone to school for years in a mythical country called England. Mother did not dispute this dictum, she herself having been allowed by a doting uncle to straggle up as untaught as the wild flowers of her native county of Clare. For myself, I stolidly accepted, without protest, or pleasure, this new epoch, which was, in my opinion, as inevitable as winter or summer. The year was 1912, the place Dublin.

Up to now my mind had floated in a vacuum, having nothing upon which to feed, for ours was a bookless home. Our parents' pursuits were racing, croquet, and bridge-playing. Their reading matter consisted solely of *The Irish Times* and *The Gentlewoman*.

The home where I had hitherto spent my life was a large grey stone house in a village on the edge of the Bog of Allen. We children,

six of us in all, played out of doors every day, wet or fine, and only on Sundays, for church, did we go beyond the confines of our own grounds. Our day closed when the town-hall clock struck six, for then we were put to bed.

My particular companion in those years was Henry, the only boy in the family, and next in age to me. For no special reason, our parents divided us into the Three Big Ones and the Three Little Ones. Thus, when it was decided that Kate was old enough to go away to school at the age of twelve, it was inevitable that Margaret and I should go too, for we made up the 'Big Trio.'

ALWAYS I longed for stories, and Mary, our nurse, was the only person who in any way supplied the demand. When the Three Little Ones had been bathed, she would seat them on the edge of the nursery table like a row of little birds, then with one spoon and one bowl of hot bread and milk she would go along the row popping some food into each open mouth in turn. The bowl empty, Mary's invariable comment was: 'Now it doesn't matter what time the night falls on you.' Into the night-nursery they would trot, and then it was my turn.

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If Mary was in a specially good mood, I could persuade her to tell me stories of her 'divilmint' when she was small—how she used to 'mitch from school' and get 'lambasted' by her father for it. These, my only excursions into the realm of imaginative fiction, enthralled me. I well knew, however, that none of it must be discussed downstairs, for our parents would not tolerate the repetition of servants' talk in the drawing-room.

In a household made up of six healthy, noisy children and five or six grown-ups, I was lonely. Not that I was in the least unhappy. Far from it. My parents were as gods on Olympus, whose lightest word was law. They were both beautiful and in love, and thus created an aura of love in the house. Discipline was firm, and the authority of any grown-up beyond dispute.

Mary's rule, however, was not exactly beneficent, and she, being the nurse, was, of course, our most constant companion. All the fears of the ignorant, unlettered peasant were hers, and these she instilled into us. She excited fear of ghosts, banshees, and the will-o'-the-wisps that are known to haunt the dark bog, plus all those other fears which are so useful for exacting obedience from the young. There was the thing that hid in the heavy plush curtains at the turn in the stairs, waiting to catch children who lingered after the town-clock had struck six. There were the skinny hands which groped from under the bed to catch children who failed to find safety in early sleep. To these menacing creatures were added the village policeman and the butcher, of whom, of course, everyone must be afraid.

It was only by Mary's good offices, as she herself so often pointed out, that we children were protected against these terrors. The smallest lapse on our part would result in the instant withdrawal of that protection and the abandonment of the offender to his terrible fate.

Such a background was not the best for any child, but this was much more the case with me when I found myself by far the youngest at boarding-school, and, in consequence, rather solitary. Kate and Margaret paired off, as they had done at home. The girl next in age to us was fourteen and naturally had no interest in a child of nine. There were twenty boarders and a hundred and twenty day-girls.

THE school was accommodated in two large adjacent houses in Rutland Square, one being the residence, the other the school. The two buildings were joined by a long underground stone passage with several cellar-doors leading off. The passage was lighted at each end by a single unshaded popping fish-tail gas-jet.

Being so much the youngest child, it was decided that I should go to bed at eight, an hour and a quarter earlier than the older girls. Every night at eight, therefore, I was reminded by the mistress taking prep that it was my bedtime. I had to tidy up my books, and not take too long about it, go out and close the schoolroom door behind me, and so find myself in utter darkness. Then began the journey of terror.

A quick rush took me to the top of the stairs, and a dash down a flight beyond took me past the open door of the Headmistress's study, where I would see the last friendly gleam of light before venturing into that dark, eerily-lit subterranean passage connecting the two buildings. The way was down a short flight of stone steps, along the cold, shadow-filled passage, up another stone stair and across the hall of the residence to the bottom of the main stairs. A peep over the banisters here confirmed that there was light in the kitchen quarters, although no sound of life emerged.

Terrified as I was, I would linger on this stone stairway as long as possible, delaying the dread moment when I must arrive at the fourth floor, enter the dark bedroom, and light the gas. Usually it gave several frightening pops and refused to light, whereupon I rushed wildly for the comparative safety of the staircase. Crouching in a corner, back to the wall, a barred landing-window at my side, I could keep watch for attackers approaching from either above or below. If I did not fall asleep by mistake, I would hear the big girls coming to bed, giving me ample warning for a rush back to my room, the removal of shoes and dress, and a dive beneath the bedclothes. In the morning, the clamouring bell roused me from stupefying sleep, and I got up heavy-eyed and unrefreshed.

SCHOOL was my first experience of being left to look after myself, and an indifferent business I made of it. Whatever Mary's faults may have been, she had always bathed

THE BEST DAYS OF MY LIFE

us, brushed and combed our hair in front of a bright fire, and comfortably tucked us into bed. My toilet now was limited to a lick of a sponge over my face in the morning, and a scratch of a comb through the front of my hair, the only part visible to myself. I found time to brush my teeth each Saturday morning, that being the day of the weekly elocution lesson.

At school my cloud of soft curls was washed once a fortnight by Maggie, the cook, who either failed to notice, or, more probably, thought it of no consequence, that foreign creatures were in strong residence. I, of course, had never heard of such a strange phenomenon. Consequently, I was at a complete loss to understand my mother's distress when holiday time came round.

Up to the time of going away to school, we had always had midday dinner with our parents and governess, and, after that, tea at about five o'clock. To stave off starvation between meals we had frequent thick slices of bread and home-made jam to supplement the snacks taken out of doors. In the summer, these consisted of fruit of all varieties from the garden. In the winter, celery roughly washed in the pump trough, or slices of the sweet turnips that were cut under the heavy chopper for the cows, or scones newly baked—and stolen from the kitchen when Biddy's back was turned. There was no nonsense about meals being spoilt by these delightful extras. We were always hungry and quite able to eat the appetising schoolroom meals when they came.

At school we had just three regular meals. Breakfast with fried bacon, and thick slices of bread soaked in the fat, and after that unlimited bread and fresh farm butter. Lunch consisted of bread and butter, golden syrup, and tea. Dinner was at six o'clock. In spite of the paucity of these meals I was never hungry.

We could always tell the day of the week by the dinner menu. Monday was the worst of all, for then there was cold meat—usually mutton—on cold plates, with hot cabbage and potatoes. The pudding was large sago cooked in water and ornamented with some slices of apple. It reminded me of the starch I had often seen being made at home, and which I thought smelt delicious. When, however, I asked to be allowed to taste it, Biddy always refused permission on the grounds that it would stick my guts together!

I don't know what the sago-pudding did, but it certainly was preferable to cold mutton.

The rule was that every pupil should eat all the food on her plate. So it had been at home, but how different the food! At school a maid handed the vegetables and we helped ourselves. I *must* take some cabbage, and could take two potatoes, because of the usefulness of their skins for hiding the obnoxious meat. At home, cold meat had never been served in the schoolroom, but, knowing that pepper was a hot food, it seemed to me simplicity itself to convert this nauseous meal into a hot one. Sprinkling it heavily with pepper, I would try to ram it down unchewed, and in as few mouthfuls as possible. The result was usually that I choked. At length the Head, tired of waiting for me, would pass a message down the table: 'Tell that child to finish her dinner,' and under the unfriendly eyes of all my seniors I would gulp it down.

AFTER dinner came music practice. This took place either in the dining-room, where, if I was lucky, the servants would be busy for at least ten minutes of the time clearing the table and preparing supper for the big girls. The preparations for supper were simple, consisting of emptying the water remaining in all the tumblers back into the jugs and putting these on a side-table with plates of cut bread and butter.

More often it seemed to be my fate to have to practise in the gymnasium, which was separated from the house by a small concrete yard. There was, of course, no light in this yard, but it was small and surrounded by school buildings, so had a certain feeling of safety.

The gas in the gym lit on a by-pass, so I must first find the long pole with a hook at the end, fix it in one of the two dangling rings, and pull to light up. If by mistake I pulled the wrong ring, then the light went out and I was left in utter darkness, and must back out across the yard, and into the house, for I dared not turn my back on that fearsome gym. Once in the house, I was not much better off, for there was no grown-up to appeal to, and I must lurk about hoping not to be discovered until the allotted half-hour had ended. That, however, did not end my troubles, for my too carefully-nurtured conscience demanded that I must make up the lost half-hour by the end of the week. If things went well, and the light

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went on at the first pull, I would walk sideways up to the platform, keeping my face turned towards the distant shadowy coat-stands, and my back towards the door. Seated at the piano, I conscientiously strove to keep my mind turned away from the tribes of Red Indians who in the shadows nightly scalped white people—generally Mother and Father.

THE weekly bath-night was, however, the worst ordeal of all, for then I had to make the passage of the dark stone staircase twice. The only bathroom was in the basement, and close to the kitchen. It also was lit with the single ubiquitous gas-jet. In school I was learning *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

*Sir William of Deloraine, good at need,
Mount thee on the wightest steed;
Spare not to spur, nor stint to ride,
Until thou come to fair Tweedside;
And in Melrose's holy pile
Seek thou the monk of St Mary's aisle.
Greet the Father well from me;
Say that the fated hour is come,
And to-night he shall watch with thee,
To win the treasure of the tomb.*

And there was the tomb, and I was expected to get into it! This act of heroism I never did achieve.

The light from the kitchen, with its glowing coal-range, streamed across the dark passage, and I used to steal along and peep in at the door, hoping to be allowed to come in and waste a few minutes there. Generally on seeing me, Maggie would order me off to bed, but once she took me on her knee and gave me a piece of cake. That, however, was only once in two-and-a-half years.

In the street far below, and opposite to my bedroom, was a public-house. On Saturday nights a woman in long dress and droopy hat used to steele up and down wailing 'By Killarney's lakes and fells.' It was always raining and always winter in that street. 'Killarney' has ever since seemed to me to be the dreariest tune that ever was written. But the singer was alive, and, like me, alone, and I used to cling to my high window-sill and watch her until the big girls came up.

In wintertime I had always suffered most severely from chilblains. Even at home every one of my toes was bandaged separately. For probably three months each year I was unable to put on a shoe, or even a stocking,

and was carried from room to room. At school I used to hobble downstairs by putting my heel on the edge of the step. All day I sat by the dining-room fire, attending no classes, and waiting for the time when Maggie would dress my toes before bedtime. In she would hurry with a basin of hot water, while I would have all the dressings untied and ready to soak off. Impatient of the time it took, each night she trapped me with the same ruse. Pointing out an imaginary mouse behind the piano, or a spider on the ceiling, she would distract my attention, then seize the bandages and pull them all off in one movement. Howling with pain, I would promise myself not to be caught that way again. The performance, however, was inevitably repeated the next night, for the memory of childhood is short.

BEING in the city, our school had no playing-fields. Every day, therefore, after lunch we were herded in crocodile to a ground that was a hockey-field in winter and tennis-courts in summer. Both aspects were equally bleak, and the walk of about a mile-and-a-half left me in an even more stunned condition than normal.

There was, however, one redeeming feature. A railway-line ran along the side of the field. I always cherished a foolish hope that sometime I might see Mother and Father in a train going somewhere. I had no idea where the railway ran to or from, but obviously passengers travelled by it. The only train with which I was acquainted ran to our village, so it seemed reasonable to assume that this one did. Anyway, whether it did or not, it provided a connecting link for me between my present life and the former one. All the time I was being exhorted to 'mark' an enormous senior on the opposing team, or to 'keep up with the ball,' I was only concerned with mooning on the side-line, watching for, and waving my hand to, every train that passed.

On Sundays we did not play games, for that day was entirely devoted to religion. Those of the big girls who had been confirmed started the day of rest and gladness with Early Service at 8 o'clock. Once a week I was thankful I was the Kid, so could sleep undisturbed until 8.30. At 11 o'clock we were all marched out to Morning Service, where the regular entertainment was giggling

at the boys from Mountjoy School, who attended the same church. Because of my tender years, I had as yet no personal interest in this sport, but Kate, who was somewhat advanced for her years, was beginning to take part, so Margaret and I had a sort of proprietary interest.

In the afternoon we all went into the drawing-room and sat in a wide circle round the fire to sing hymns. The first one was chosen by the Head, after which each girl in turn, as well as the mistress on duty, chose one. They were all painstakingly sung right through to the bitter end. Twenty-three hymns at a sitting.

Revived by a cup of tea and two fingers of cake, for this was Sunday, it was time to prepare for the next religious exercise. Once more we were marshalled in the hall, each asked if we had been somewhere and if we had

got our penny, and eventually marched off to our second rendezvous with the Mountjoy boys.

I knew that at this time I must not allow myself to nod, lest someone should decide that I was tired and ought to be in bed. The fear of being left alone in that enormous house was quite enough to keep me wide-awake, and even able occasionally to answer a question afterwards about the sermon.

When, however, at the end of term I stepped into the dirty cab that would take us to Broadstone Station, all memories of school life were washed clean from my mind. Already, in happy prospect, I was rushing round the garden and fields, greeting dogs, and looking for new calves, my lame-legged duck, and the cock that had such a strange friendship with Jet, the cat.

Genealogy

W. P. JEFFCOCK

THERE is no doubt an interest shown in genealogy at the present time by many in various walks of life. There are, however, still those who decry anything to do with the past, and those who seem to connect such an interest with some kind of snobbery. The latter category ought to be made to see easily that the study of genealogy has by no means exclusively to do with 'old families,' but that it is a democratic study in that it really tells you who people are. What is wanted now is an increased interest all round. After all, the love of family tradition is patriotism in miniature. We rightly venerate our parents, so ought we to want to find out something about our more remote ancestors, who are just as much responsible for our being. The pity is that we so very rarely know our great-grandparents! With the increase in communications, and the consequent removal of

people from their original surroundings, there has come about a lack of continuity and the loss of a background for many concerned.

GRANTED we wish to interest ourselves in the subject, there are several ways in which we can help ourselves—and others—in, say, making a family pedigree or history.

If we have interesting family letters, we must keep them; and the same applies to diaries—of course, discretion must be used as to the ultimate utility of these. Then there are newspaper-cutting books. Perhaps these are not kept now as much as formerly, but there still are some, and it is most important that these books should be preserved either in private or public hands.

Then family portraits. The writer confesses to finding an additional interest in a painting

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if the names and dates are visible. This is not necessary, provided these details are at the back of the picture. 'John Smith, 1860-1918' is quite enough. This applies also to paintings and photographs of family houses, and for that matter photographs of members of the family.

Almost everyone has some kind of idea where his or her family originated, and, if this is so, a lot of use can be made of Parish Registers. The Registers of the Registrar-General contain records of birth, marriages, and deaths only from 1st July 1837; but they do contain more than that. There are in them non-parochial registers mainly before 1st July 1837—some going back to 1642—which deal with registers of nonconformist bodies; records of births, marriages, and deaths at sea since 1st July 1837; the army Register (some entries back to 1761); and the Consular Returns since 1849.

To return to Parish Registers. The earliest date of these is 1558, although there are three parishes whose registers go back to 1538—viz. Elsworth, Cambridgeshire, and Perlethorpe and Carburton, Nottinghamshire. During the Commonwealth they are very defective. The writing in the 16th and 17th centuries is an interesting study, and a study it is, and would-be searchers would be well advised to get hold of examples of the letters before embarking on copying. The Bishop's transcripts may be useful when the Registers are missing. These are kept at diocesan centres and are the yearly returns made by the incumbent to the archdeacon of the diocese. They are rarely existing for the period 1645 to 1659.

THE genealogical importance of newspapers can be said to have started about 1665, and the importance is in the advertisements which deal with apprenticeships. It was the practice whenever an apprentice ran away for the master to advertise—the newspaper offering a reward. Such advertisements number very many, and they usually give the name of the apprentice, the name, address, and trade of the master, and generally the name and

address of the apprentice's father. They also often contain a description of the appearance of the runaway as regards looks and clothes. The Apprentice Lists in the Public Record Office give the year, names of apprentice and master, their places of residence, the trade, and the consideration.

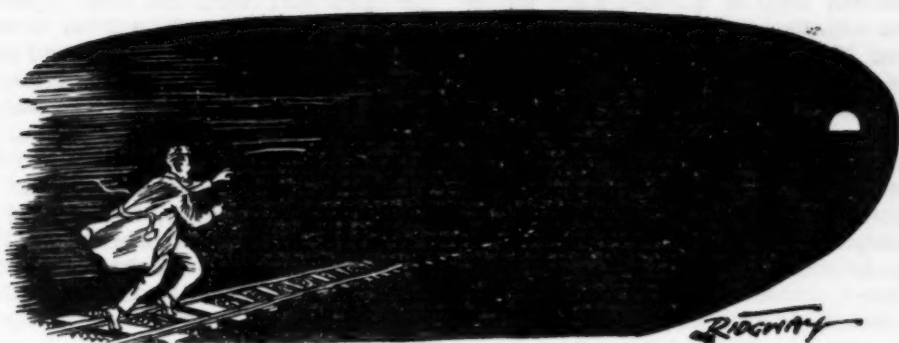
The files of *The Times* can be seen at most public libraries. The entries of births, marriages, and deaths here have the side-heading (surname) in capital letters only from 2nd October 1893.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of wills, for, besides dates and relationships, they often throw a light on the circumstances of the deceased. Before the abolition of the Ecclesiastical Courts in 1858 wills were for the most part proved in the archdeacon's court, diocesan court, or peculiar court having jurisdiction over the place where the testator died or held property. The Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills can be seen at Somerset House, and the York wills at the District Probate Registry at York.

AMONGST the many other sources of information are printed books, such as directories, *Dictionary of National Biography*, peerages, *Burke's Landed Gentry*, and Fox-Davies's *Armorial Families*. School Registers, of which there are many, should not be overlooked; they differ somewhat in their usefulness. Gravestones and memorial tablets can be very well noticed, as they give relationship, some of which are often lacking in Registers. The inscriptions on gravestones do not go back far being visible owing to the shocking neglect of some of our graveyards and gravestones, and very often the gravestones were not erected. A lot have been catalogued.

Lastly let us remember that a pedigree of a family and a pedigree of an individual are quite different things.

The above aims at being merely a very brief sketch of a vast subject. If it has kindled a spark of keenness amongst even a handful of folk, so much the better.



The Tube

RONALD HART

THE little man hurried to the tube and down a long tunnel to the booking-hall. A high wind screamed after him, pushing him along. The stone-flagged floor was covered by a thick film of dust which swirled up with each gust of wind, smothering his clothes and his hair in a fine white film and getting into his eyes so that he couldn't see very clearly; but he looked back once, and the tunnel was dark.

The booking-hall was deserted . . .

He went to the ticket-office and rapped on the window. The tickets were in their usual brackets round the walls and bundles of treasury notes were scattered loosely over the counter. The window was closed . . . He banged hard on the window, grazing his knuckles, but the office was empty and he couldn't find a porter anywhere.

He began walking down the escalator, which had stopped, and it seemed longer than he remembered. He walked slowly, counting each step, and when he had counted two hundred he paused and looked back, but he couldn't see the beginning of the stairs. He ran the rest of the way jumping two stairs at a time. When he reached the bottom he was too tired to notice that the advertisement panels on each side were empty. The air was

cold. The noise of the wind had been displaced by a quietness more disturbing than the noise.

HE was a worried little man, and when he sat down on the platform he looked anxiously at his watch. 'Three-fifteen,' he mumbled. 'What with the rain, delay on the stairs, and having no ticket I shall be late,' and he wrung his hands with annoyance. He waited for some minutes, but no train came; neither did any person come on to the platform; and looking down at his watch he saw that it still said three-fifteen. He glanced quickly at the station clock and that, too, said three-fifteen, and, though he watched it for some time, the hands didn't move. He walked through a short passageway to another platform and the clock there also remained permanently at three-fifteen. 'All the clocks have stopped,' he said.

Between both platforms was the station-master's office, but the door was marked PRIVATE, and the little man stood hesitantly outside for a while before he plucked up enough courage to knock and, when he received no reply, to enter. Nobody was in there, but a clock on the wall inside said

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three-fifteen. There was a desk, two chairs, a typewriter, and, on a wall-bracket farther down, a telephone. He lifted the receiver and dialled TIM, the speaking-clock. An even voice answered: 'At the third stroke . . . it will be three . . . fifteen . . . precisely.' Three strokes sounded clearly, but the voice only repeated: 'At the third stroke . . . it will be three . . . fifteen . . . precisely . . . At the third stroke . . . it will be three . . . fifteen . . . precisely . . . it will be three . . . fifteen . . . precisely . . . precisely . . . precisely . . . precisely . . . precisely,' until the words had no meaning at all. He became seized by panic and suddenly banged the receiver heavily against the wall. Pieces of black plastic flew in the air, but the blunt, broken piece of receiver kept answering: 'three . . . fifteen . . . precisely . . . three . . . fifteen . . . precisely.' He fell against the wall, banging his head, covering his ears with his hands. He yelled: 'Is anybody here?' But no reply came. He ran from the office to the platform: 'Is anybody here?' But his voice only echoed back mockingly from the tunnels: 'Is anybody here . . . Is anybody here . . . anybody here . . . body here . . . body here . . . body here?' until the man sat down on a bench with his head between his knees, weeping with fear.

A SLOW wind came blowing down the platform, making a sound like plaintive music, and it met another wind which blew from the tunnel. The two winds caused dust to rise in shapes of grey figures which danced pavan-like in the air. The man tried to run, but quickly the two winds pinioned him against the wall, while great shapes of dust rose up and held out diaphanous arms to touch him. He slid along the wall slowly, inch by inch, until he reached a passageway and, quickly darting round, he ran madly away with the wind behind him clothed in dust which gently touched him, let him run awhile, then caught up, touching his hair, his shoulders, enveloping him, running before him, shrill with mockery—and hate.

He still ran, blindly, his arms held wide, fighting for breath, which gasped away from him in tiny sobs of fear, until he sank down exhausted. The wind had lost him and the dust settled in a white carpet on the floor. He could hear the wind whining angrily in the distance and he knew that it was looking for him. He was in a long tunnel, the two ends of

which were only far-distanced pinpoints, and the lights were white and cold. Moisture seeped through the walls and ran in small rivulets along the tunnel, which sloped down towards the end from which he had come, but the little man didn't care about the moisture, for he was glad to have escaped the wind and the dust. He took off his jacket and rolled it neatly to make a pillow for his head. He dozed for a short while, but suddenly he awoke with a chill of fear in his heart. Then he remembered how he had cheated the wind, and courage returned. He laughed, and his laughter echoed down the tunnel, along the platforms, up the escalators, into the booking-hall, where the wind waited.

THE wind came down softly, carefully, so as not to disturb the noisy dust. It slid along the tunnel in gentle gusts until it came to the man, and then, shaking with fury, it rose up around him, stirring the dust into huge, powerful shapes which danced with suppressed anger before his eyes. Other shapes came, and an army of them stood around him, and they closed in, their long, cruel arms reaching out to cut his face, pluck his hair, and lay gritty fingers in his eyes, buffeting him until he fell screaming to the ground. 'Help! Help! Help!' he shouted. But no help came. He grovelled on the damp tunnel-floor while the wind turned him over and over, throwing him viciously against the wall. 'Please,' he said, in a tiny, beaten voice, 'what do you want? I'll give you anything, only leave me, let me be . . . let me die . . .'

The wind abated slightly and the shapes stood still, but they didn't answer.

'Please,' the little man said again, 'I'll do anything or say anything you like, only leave me now.' And then he heard a terrible laugh echoing up and down the tunnel. He realised that it was his own laughter, and the noise frightened him, for it grew louder and louder and more hysterical with each moment, developing into a ferocious scream. He threw himself against the shapes of dust, and the great, agonising sobs which forced themselves from his breast were a mixture of fear and anger. Clawing, biting, punching, he tore right through the dust and banged his head heavily against the wall. He turned, and the dust-shapes were still there, swaying mockingly, looming larger than before, but as he tore at them again they opened up and allowed

him to pass through, then closed behind him, dancing, while he fell against the wall. He crouched down and stared without comprehension at the blood which dripped from a cut in his head.

HE started walking again, dragging his legs heavily, but though he walked for many hours the end of the tunnel seemed just as far away. The dust-shapes formed silently behind him, marching in orderly columns and sometimes rising up before him to beckon gleefully and then subside in ripples on the floor.

'I will walk on,' he said to himself, 'for the wind and the dust can do me no more harm than they have done already. If I keep my head I will one day escape from this place. I will not despair and become prey to this wind which hates me.'

A new tunnel opened to his left, which he had not seen before, and it seemed that here lay a way of escape, an answer to his prayer. Heedless of the wind, he turned in to the new tunnel. The wind became angered and again stung his face with cruel lashes, but the man only smiled now and shrugged the wind away. 'I have been captured,' he said, 'by some malignant spirit, but now I will be free again.' Full of new strength he turned to address the wind. 'I will walk on no matter what you do, and I will escape from you,' he said. The wind howled more fiercely, full of hate around his head.

At the end of the tunnel was a door, and the man ran towards it with the feeling that freedom was his if he could only pass to the other side. He turned the handle and pulled, but the wind whined against the door, so that although he could open it slightly the wind forced it back again. He turned and sank, defeated, to the floor.

The wind abated slightly, confident of its victory over the little man, and it quietened further, caressing his hair with soft, gentle gusts which soothed him. Suddenly he saw his chance, and while the wind was still gentle he leapt up, pulled open the door, and closed it quickly after him. He leaned against the door inside, shutting his eyes, and the wind howled outside, but there was not even a crack or keyhole for it to come through and menace him further.

He found he was in the stationmaster's office again. A feeling of peace and content-

ment overcame him, making him want to sit down and rest for a time, but from somewhere, above the noise of the wind outside, he could hear dozens of tiny, brittle voices shrieking: 'At the third stroke . . . it will be three . . . fifteen . . . precisely,' and, looking down, he could see the broken pieces of telephone-receiver moving round his feet and vibrating with sound. He wanted to stay in the office away from the wind, but the voices grew menacing and louder. He became more afraid of them than he was of the wind. He stamped on the pieces of telephone, but each one screamed so loudly that he had to stop.

HE ran out of the office back to the platform where he had first sat down. He lay on a bench, covering his face with his hands, moaning softly, no longer confident. 'If the wind finds me here,' he thought, 'it will surely kill me, for I have cheated and angered it twice.'

The platform clock was just above him, and it still stood at three-fifteen. The little man pondered and the conviction was born in him that he had been trapped in a moment of eternity from which he could never escape. He would never grow hungry, or thirsty, or tired, or old, but, instead, he would wander for ever at the wind's mercy, which could hurt but never kill him. 'Perhaps I am already dead?' he thought 'and this is some purgatory more terrible than fire.'

He became more calm, and considered his problem. 'I came from an ordinary street to an ordinary tube-station and I should therefore be able to go out the same way. I have allowed this situation to overwhelm me. I have been tricked by my sense of time, for it is only necessary for me to walk down to the exit-tunnel, climb the escalator, go across the booking-hall and out through another tunnel to the street. I will do it calmly, without fuss. I will walk slowly. Nothing can prevent my escape.' So saying, he rose from the bench and smoothed his wrinkled jacket. He looked at the clock and smiled contemptuously. 'The clock has stopped,' he said aloud. He came to the escalator and started climbing. There was a smile of triumph on his face.

IT was at the moment of his smile that the long, white lights began gradually to fade . . .

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He shrieked and broke into a faster pace. 'Oh God! No, dear God, no! To be in this place! And in darkness!' All the fear which he had managed to control returned, and he sped quickly up the stairs, eyes closed, heart beating faster, faster, faster, but the top seemed to be miles away. He fell, exhausted, on the stairs, but immediately he stood again, dragging himself onward, and only a short way ahead he could see the top of the stairs, and the ticket-office, and the booking-hall, which compelled him onwards though his legs were leaden weights. The lights dimmed further, and one or two went out, and from a platform below came another noise which terrified him. It was the wind, whining through the tunnels, searching for him, until at last he heard it coming closer and he knew it rested at the bottom of the stairs. Then it came after him, whooping, leaping, like a beast of prey.

The little man ran. Gone was his confidence and resolve. A voice within him said: 'Fool! Stop running. Meet the wind. Like this, you are allowing it to destroy you!' But nevertheless he kept running, anxious only to escape the wind, and when he reached the

booking-hall he turned blindly into the first tunnel he could see.

Far down there was an aperture of daylight, yet as he sped towards it the tunnel walls closed in, touching his shoulders, and the ceiling dropped and touched his head, and the aperture became smaller, smaller, smaller, and disappeared . . . He sobbed with frustration, for the end of the tunnel was completely closed. He turned back, but the wind caught up with him, blowing in his face, so that for every three steps he took he was pushed back two.

He battled against the wind in fading light and as he reached the other end of the tunnel he saw a huge steel door slowly swinging inwards, threatening to close his only way of escape. The wind allowed him to come near the door, so that he could almost touch it, but as he came nearer the wind threw him back against the wall and his head-wound reopened. He threw himself at the wind again, and again it hurled him back. The steel door slowly closed. The wind disappeared under it with a howl of triumph. The little man knew that he was trapped. There was no noise in the tunnel. The lights went out.

Make-Believe

*They change into hundreds of beautiful things,
The long-ago wishes we once held so dear.
As gossamer gauze of a dragon-fly's wings,
Elusive and fragile, again they appear;
They dance in the moonbeams on warm summer nights,
They incense the pines and the roses of June,
They perfume the heather on wild mountain heights,
And steal through the notes of a nightingale's tune;
They deepen the gentian's heavenly blue
And glow with the sunset and gleam in the dew—
And these are the dreams that will never come true.*

*They swing in the waves by a strange coral shore,
The dear little ships that are lost to all men;
Their captains have vanished, their crews are no more,
And no human eyes shall behold them again.
Though wonderful cargoes awaited in vain
Lie scattered and spoilt and encrusted with shells,
These derelicts, safe from the wind and the rain,
Drift there to the music of sea-witches' spells,
At peace from the breakers, away from the foam.
We never will find them however we roam—
And these are the ships that will never come home.*

JULIET G. LEEMAN.

Science at Your Service

MALARIA IN RETREAT

WHEN in the late war the world's main source of quinine became inaccessible, the menace of malaria seemed grim indeed. But a succession of synthetic anti-malarial drugs has come along since, and now a new British drug is available which in tests against malaria in laboratory animals has 1000 times the anti-malarial potency of quinine. Only a small weekly dose—25 milligrams—is needed to enable a person to live in a malaria-infested district and to protect him from developing the disease. The new drug also gives most promising curative results with people already suffering from the disease. Dosing all the inhabitants of two African villages with the drug resulted in their freedom from malaria within two months; moreover, mosquitoes became free from the malaria parasite, for the insects ceased to acquire it from their human victims. Volunteers in the United States were given the drug and exposed to biting from malaria-carrying mosquitoes; even up to a year afterwards, no case of the disease had developed.

Yet the unique potency of this drug is not its only asset. It is tasteless and so far no undesirable side-effects have been observed. This is of the greatest importance, for a malaria preventive or suppressant is never wholly effective in practice if it is unpopular, because people who should take it regularly tend to evade doing so. In some cases the toxic effects of regular dosage with anti-malarial drugs have been as health-depressing as malaria itself. There seems to be every hope that the new British drug, now being made in this country, will not suffer from these physiological or psychological defects. So far, too, there is little or no sign that the malaria organism can develop tolerance to the small weekly dose required for human protection. In time some degree of tolerance could be developed, perhaps by particular strains of malaria. As to this, however, there is good reason for optimism. The development of this drug may one day be seen as one of the chief medical advances of its time.

FLOATING SEATS

A new principle for seating, first conceived in an attempt to provide stools for the housewife to relieve the strain of ironing and kitchen-work generally and described fairly enough as 'floating,' is embodied in various models of stools for office, factory, or home use. Unlike the normal stool, the actual seat is not rigidly fixed to the legs. The four tubular legs meet after horizontal bending in a central point below the seat, which is itself attached to a vertical column passing through the centre of the stool. This column is held in position by two sets of tensioned springs fixed to the stool legs at upper and lower points. The whole seating load is carried by the springs, which allow movements up and down or swaying in any direction. It is claimed that this exceptional range of flexibility and the transference of bodily movements to the suspension of the seat together reduce fatigue.

Five different models are so far available. One type has an upholstered and revolving seat, with or without back-rest, and allowing for height-adjustment with a seven-inch range of alteration. Another is similar, but with a seat of polished hardwood, again with or without back-rest. There is also a simpler model without height-adjustment designed for cafeteria or bar use.

FLAW-DETECTING INK

A new industrial product developed in England is an ink or fluid which, when applied to ferrous materials, enables flaws or minute cracks to be instantly spotted. The ink is fluorescent and magnetic. It may be applied to a ferrous article by pouring, dipping, or spraying, or with a brush. Magnetisation can be induced by various methods—by current flow for the detection of longitudinal flaws or, by the magnetic flux method, using a permanent magnet, an electro-magnet, or a magnetising coil. When the treated object is looked at under ultra-violet light, surface cracks or internal flaws are shown in a brilliant and fluorescent green.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

A NEW FRUIT

Pear-apple hybrid seedlings have been grown at the famous John Innes Horticultural Institution, now removed from outer London to Hertfordshire. It is believed that this is the first such achievement, a similar Swedish claim having since been proved incorrect. A likely variety of pear, *Fertility*, had its flowers pollinated with pollen from two varieties of apple. A solution of one of the hormone growth-promoting substances was also used. From 16 such pollinations 15 fruits developed; 92 seeds from these fruits were extracted and sown, 69 of them germinating. Finally, only 11 of the seedlings survived, as there appears to be poor root-development. This trouble can probably be overcome by grafting the new fruit variety on to apple rootstock. In early growth the seedlings resembled pear seedlings, but later a stronger resemblance to apple developed. It remains to be seen whether a useful new fruit variety has been invented. If so, it must be several years, of course, before seedling trees can become commercially available. Scientifically, the most interesting aspect of this development is the use of the chemical plant-hormone substance. Cross pollination between pears and apples has been attempted quite often in the past, but fruits containing seeds have not resulted. The introduction of the hormone would seem to be the decisive factor in achieving seed-formation. As fruit and plant breeders know, distant crosses between varieties are almost invariably difficult to bring off. It may well be that all such crosses can be greatly aided by hormone growth-promoting preparations.

A PEAT-FIRED TURBINE

As part of the national research plan to utilise our peat resources, a British engineering firm has recently built a 750-kilowatt gas-turbine which is operated on powdered peat. The method developed for mechanically feeding the peat with controlled flow to the combustion-chamber is said to enable the plant to run as smoothly as similar turbines run on oil. The hot exhaust-gases are ingeniously used for drying future supplies of the peat. Peat is a widely distributed low-grade fuel in various countries, so it may well be that this British pilot turbine brings export opportunities as well as low power costs for factories here that are situated close to our own peat deposits.

TRANSLATING MACHINES

So rapid is the development of electronic equipment that to-day even large-size adding-machines seem mere toys. One of the next fields likely to be conquered is that of translation. Machines in which the electronic impulses can simulate the human faculty of memory will be able to convert words in one language into the counterpart words of another. Indeed, with set passages this has already been done in the United States, Russian being machine-translated into English. Syntax and word-order difficulties will not perhaps be machine-solved, but the word-by-word-order translation that emerges from an electronic machine can be swiftly reshaped by anybody with a little knowledge of the original language and the subject written about. One of the problems to be overcome in designing translating-machines is the size of vocabulary required. The bigger the load upon electronic memory, the bigger and more costly the machine must be. It is possible that machines with restricted vocabulary-power will be developed for special purposes—for example, translating technical papers. A problem quite unsolved as yet is the method of feeding the original printed page or matter to the machine—some photographic or television device is needed by which the machine's memory is instantly called into operation on sight of printed words. This should not be regarded as something that is only remotely possible, for some useful progress along these lines has already been made. Mechanical translation is in sight, though perhaps a little dimly as yet. It seems almost sad and regrettable, for the human skill of translation has hardly ever been well paid. In literature and in science the hard-working translator has usually been an economic Cinderella. There is certainly no cost-saving motive for these machines of the future. Their only virtue will be in saving time.

TANK INSULATION

A British firm has devised a simple insulating jacket for domestic hot-water cylinders. The jacket is actually composed of sections, each six inches wide. These are easily fixed to an extensible ring placed round the water-inlet pipe, and they are held in tight position to the cylinder by black lacquered-steel bands. The jacket sections contain $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch layers of fibreglass; the enclosing material has a canvas backing and a cream-coloured

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

plastic outer surface, which is described as non-inflammable and vermin-proof. There should be a sizeable demand for this easy-to-fix and easy-to-move insulating device, for one of the troubles of hot-water tank insulation has been the cumbersome or fairly permanent nature of the outer material required. Alternatively, the simple systems adopted to permit easy removal have usually possessed poor insulation efficiency. Cylinders equipped with an electric immersion-heater must be well insulated if this method of domestic hot-water supply is to be operated at a reasonably cheap rate.

PLANT LABELS

The fleeting plant-label is a gardener's curse, but even when the label stays in position the words written on it can often be just as ephemeral. A new type of label consists of a strong holder into which a white card slides; the card remains visible through a transparent plastics window. However, more ingenuity than this has been put into the design. The outer end of the white card has a coating of wax. When the card has been written upon and slid into the holder, momentary application of flame from a match or lighter softens the wax, which is then pressed over the edge of the holder to form a weatherproof seal. The holder is strongly constructed to remain in tied position upon the plant; the card once filled in is exposed neither to the climate nor to the risk of sliding out of the holder again. Sold by the dozen, these labels cost only a few pence each.

OFF THE SHELF

A new British invention seems likely to attract people who have interests in shops or stores. It is claimed to obviate the use of ladders in reaching less accessible goods. Briefly, it is of tubular construction, with cork-lined jaws and a swivel head that can be operated from the other and holding end. Two kinds of jaw fitting are available, one for use where the main problem is handling goods in bottles or tins, the other where the articles will have varying shapes—for example,

hardware goods. The main structure of the appliance is made of enamelled steel. These hand-operable 'reachers' are made in eight different lengths, ranging from 2½ feet to 7 feet. They seem likely to have particularly high utility in shops where storage space is limited.

FOOD-CONTAINERS FROM JAM-JARS

Most housewives will be well aware of the several devices that enable jam-jars to be converted into effective fruit-bottling containers. One of the earliest of these devices, in fact, made a noteworthy contribution to wartime food economy. But once again the empty jam-jar seems to be nobody's child in most households. The number needed for fruit-bottling have long ago been accumulated and there is not much interest in jar salvage. A new device for fitting to empty jam-jars is a top with a hinged lid; the collar that fits round the rim of the jar has a button on the side, and on pressing this the hinged flap of the lid opens. This invention should enable a few jars in the majority of households to be usefully employed as containers for other foods.

A PERFUMED FLOOR-POLISH

The soap manufacturers long ago deemed it an advantage to introduce perfumes for adding fragrance to the natural and cruder odour of their products. This has not hitherto been imitated by manufacturers of floor-polish and furniture-polish, though it must be doubted whether everybody enjoys the aromas of these materials. For his own part, the writer has long believed that floor-polishes should have some characteristic smell to serve as a warning that the safety-margin of friction between foot and floor has just been dangerously reduced for the unwary. A wax floor-polish impregnated with oil of lavender is now available in this country, and is offered at a quite moderate price per tin. The wax is white and may be used for light or dark floors; and the time-honoured materials for a good polish are used in making it—beeswax and carnauba.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Sweet-Pea Planting

THE sweet-pea is one of the most popular flowers to-day. Every year the Scottish National Sweet-Pea Society carries out trials and it is surprising the number of specimens that are sent in from various parts of America, Canada, and Great Britain for awards. Some may wonder at my writing about sweet-peas at this time of the year, because they will be of the opinion that the seed should be sown out of doors in October or November and then perhaps covered with continuous cloches. On the other hand, there are undoubtedly many folk who either raise their plants in the greenhouse or who buy plants from a nurseryman to put out into the open during April.

It is, of course, unwise to plant if the soil is cold and sticky. Nevertheless, no keen sweet-pea grower would leave the plants in their boxes or pots longer than necessary. The advantage of continuous cloches is that they can be put over a strip of land to warm it and dry it, and thus make it possible to plant the sweet-peas a week or ten days later. A tip for those who have no cloches is to open up shallow broad trenches no deeper than 3 inches, and then to plant by spreading out the roots horizontally with the idea of getting them to start their growth in the top warmer layer of soil. It is a revolutionary idea, but in clay soil it works well.

Normally, of course, if the land is a nice loam and is sufficiently warm, deep holes will be made with a trowel so that the roots can be put in perpendicularly. It helps greatly if one can fork sedge-peat into the top three or four inches of soil first, for this provides fine organic matter in which the roots of the sweet-peas revel. A good fertiliser to use is fish manure with a 10 per cent potash content, applied at 4 to 5 ounces to the yard run. Plant firmly and then, if the main stems have not been pinched back, they should be topped, so as to cause the basal buds to break. The secondary growth is invariably stronger than the first, and bears better leaves.

After planting, whatever top-growth has developed as a result of the pinching back must be supported in order to prevent it lying

on the ground. Put in little twiggy sticks. The stumps of worn-out birch-brooms are excellent for this purpose. The best flowers come from the cordon system of training, and bamboos may be pushed into the ground about 2 inches away from each plant. The twiggy growths will keep the plants upright until they can be tied to the bamboos or sticks. Some people find the split rings ideal for training sweet-peas, and these can be slipped into position as the plants grow.

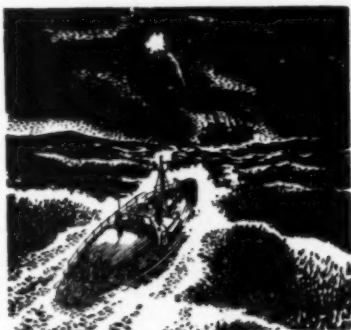
It is possible to allow two stems per plant and to train one straight up a bamboo and the second up another bamboo pushed into the ground 2 or 3 inches away. Actually, this is not a bad idea for the stronger growers. However, whether you stick to one stem or two, it is important to pinch out the clingers every ten days or so and to remove the side-growth at the same time. Other than this there is very little to be done except to mulch the rows in May and June, preferably with sedge-peat, in order to smother weeds and keep the moisture in the soil. Sometimes it is worth while in the North to protect the plants from cold winds in their early stages by pushing in pea-sticks a foot or so away on the windward side of the row.

Of the numerous varieties available, the following newer ones, chosen for their sweet-scent, are worth trying: *Myosotis*, a large, deep rich mid-blue with long stems; *Petunia*, a deep petunia-mauve of good shape and vigorous growth; *Albatross*, a large white of perfect form and robust growth; *Moonlight*, a lovely cream; *Princess Elizabeth*, a salmon-pink and cream of fine shape and size; *Felicity*, a creamy-pink; and *Margaret O'Brien*, a salmon-cerise. Of the striped varieties, I recommend *Twink*, a cream marked with bright orange-scarlet; *Jester*, a cream lined with cherry-red; and *Pixie*, a deep cream striped with orange-salmon.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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